1;Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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In the past century (and in isolated regions still) most of
the clothing of the small farmers was made at home by the 294
women. Now, however, it is nearly all shop-bought. Certain 461
vestiges of the former practice remain, however, in knitting 476
sweaters, gloves, socks, and scarfs; and in the country districts, 178
at least of West and North Clare, there is a custom which demands that some woman of the house be always at work. If there is no other task on hand, they must occupy themselves with knitting. In former days, the daughters of the community might gather in a *meitheal,* or coöperative work group, under the supervision of older women for carding and spinning flax and wool. In any event, the younger woman, the girl, is at the older woman's command.

Much the same content of emotion and sentiment exists 593
in this relationship, subordinate as the daughter must remain, as in the case of the boy. But in the case of the daughter there is never a readjustment, and there is never a period of community of interest with the father. Nor need the mother fear a competition with an impatient oncoming successor as must the farm father who knows he cannot put off forever his relinquishing his farm to his son. For, eagerly as the daughter may look forward to her own marriage, she knows that marriage will bring in a rivalry over household control with a totally new person in an entirely new scene. It is her husband's mother, not her own, to whom new adjustments must be made. The implication of this fact, and the struggle it entails, will bear examination in the discussion of marriage.

Still another relationship exists within the household under normal circumstances. The relationship of brother to sister has its reflection in farm work. But it is a relationship with a different history from the relationship between siblings of similar sex. Sexual differences in behavior have made a different habit, beginning very early in the child's experience. And, for each of them, the sexual differences are colored a great deal by the norms which mark the rela-

167 the great burst of the fifties and has been continuous ever since.

167 Many attempts have been made to find causes for this
emigration. Perhaps the most successful have been those
●178 dealing with economic factors. Among the most frequently
241 suggested is the change in agriculture since the famine. The assumption advanced is that the change from tillage to livestock production has cut down the rural employment, which in turn has driven the rural population to emigrate. Undoubtedly, there has been a correlation, particularly in the earliest years and at the time of the land clearances after the famine. In fact, from 1847 to 1852 (the famine years) there was a huge decrease in the area under small holdings of 1–30 acres, a decrease of 1,395,000 acres, but since then, in the years from 1852 to 1909 (after which holdings began generally to be increased), the corresponding decrease was only 155,000 acres.

The Report on Agricultural Statistics, 1847–1926, published by the Free State Department of Agriculture and Commerce, from which the figures are derived, comments that "this comparatively small transference of land from small holdings with high densities to larger holdings with low densities had but little effect upon reducing tillage or increasing livestock,"[2] the agricultural changes which are supposed to have affected emigration. The Report demonstrates that between 1854 and 1912 the smaller the holding, the larger the increases in densities of all livestock, except dry cattle two years old and over, and the larger the decrease in density of ploughed land.

In other words, the change in agriculture, whatever may have been its effect upon employment prospects for the small farmer outside his own farm, proceeded more rapidly on the small farms. The tables of the Report show that large farmers decreased their tillage at a more rapid rate than

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[2] *Agricultural Statistics, 1847–1926*, p. xliii.

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small farmers only in the periods of 1917 to 1926 and 1854 to 1874, while continuously over the whole period 1874 to 1926 small farmers "got out of tillage more rapidly than large farmers." Too close appeal accordingly cannot be made to changes in agriculture for an understanding of Irish emigration.

In fact local densities of population do not now and never have shown a great deal of correspondence with densities of tillage. The highest percentage of agricultural land ploughed (29 per cent) was reached in 1851. Since then it has fallen steadily, to 13 per cent in 1926. Sweden comes nearest to this low percentage of tillage, with 52 per cent of her arable land tilled. Consequently, the Irish population was at no time solely dependent upon tillage crops.

Before 1881 a correlation could be drawn with some accuracy between the decrease in tillage and the decrease in rural population. Thus in poor law unions (administrative areas) in which ploughed land decreased population also decreased as shown in Table 1.[3]

TABLE 1
Relation between Decrease in Ploughed Land and Decrease in Population

Decrease in Ploughed Land (per cent)	Decrease in Population (per cent)
0–20	13
20–30	26
30–40	28
50 and over	34

But since 1881 similar tables show that there is no correspondence between the decreases, and that even those poor law unions in which tillage has increased show an ordinary loss of population. Consequently, decline in tillage had little effect upon emigration after 1881. This becomes even more evident when it is understood that in both 1854

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[3] *Ibid.*, p. lxi.

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178 and 1912 the thirteen counties densest in rural population
included only six of the counties densest in ploughed land.
241 "Dense tillage was in the east, dense rural population in the
west,"[4] as it still is.

In the same search for economic causes, a better case has
167 been made for the change from milch cattle to beef cattle
178 production. As we have seen, milch cows are characteris-
231 tically associated with the small farmers. During the period of emigration, the number of dry cattle has risen in proportion to the number of milch cattle almost steadily; the range is from 2,372 total cattle to the 1,000 milch cows in 1854, to 3,334 to the 1,000 in 1926; fluctuations have been very slight. It is true that the number of milch cattle has also risen steadily, if slowly. Such a change in actual numbers of cattle and in proportions of dry to milch cattle, the latter capable of yielding the greater amounts of food for farm consumption, may have had some effect upon the displacement of human beings by cattle, but certainly not a great enough one to determine the emigration. The lack of correspondence between these changes is evident when it is remembered that the change has taken place principally in the former tillage areas, and also that in 1926 the areas of greatest milch cow density were substantially the same as in 1854. The very little direct correspondence there can be is well exemplified in the contrast between County Clare, which fell from a population of 336 to the 1,000 acres of crop and pasture to 129, while milch cows remained practically the same in number (100 to 110 to the 1,000 acres). and County Mayo (a poorer region), where population fell only from 375 to 245 and milch cows also remained practically the same (90 to 100).

From these figures it is evident that the decline in rural population is not directly correlated with decline in tillage or change in cattle production. The failure of employment

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[4] *Ibid.*, p. lvi.

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coincident upon that change cannot be assigned as the sole cause of emigration.

As the decline in population has been more characteristic of the small farmers, it may be possible to associate it with social conditions pertaining among that class. They have participated in the very agricultural changes which are thought to have caused their dispersal. They enjoyed the high prosperity of the closing decades of the last century, and won the progressive reforms of agrarian tenure. Yet they continued to send forth thousands of emigrants. Fluctuating economic conditions have undoubtedly had their effect, but factors whose greatest demonstrable result is merely to stay or hurry the stream of emigration cannot be evoked as efficient causes. In taking the problem directly to the small farmer, it will become possible to sketch the social setting in which emigration takes its form.

Clearly connected with the decline in population are other demographic statistics, particularly those of marriage. They present features which are unique among civilized peoples. Inasmuch as they are again indications of an underlying uniform social pattern whose occurrences they record, it is necessary to analyze them in terms of the behavior patterns of rural Ireland. Like emigration, they are more characteristic of the country people. Springing from marriage, they are thus directly indicative of social forces within the small farmers' family economy. 162

Briefly stated, they present the following characteristics: In Saorstat Eireann in 1926, according to the census then conducted, there was a larger proportion of unmarried persons of all ages than in any other country for which records are kept. Marriage, furthermore, did not take place until a comparatively late age. Thus 80 per cent of males between twenty-five and thirty years of age were unmarried in 1926, 62 per cent of males thirty to thirty-five, 50 per cent of males thirty-five to forty, and 26 per cent of males fifty-five to 162 582 589

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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Marriage transfers the boy into the adult farm-owning 581
man, the farm father into the old man; it brings the same
changes for the women. Such changes are, of course, not 885
abrupt; the groups which are substantially of the same age 886
do not undergo disruption with the movement of one of
their number from status of boy to that of man. But, on
the other hand, there are general patterns of behavior which
mark off these groupings in an informal manner, and which
betray their origin in a social valuation of age differences.

The behavior of the different age groups is of the most 561
intimate everyday kind, and consequently reflects those differentiations
of status which are given formal and explicit
recognition at marriage. Felt to be too natural a part of
daily life to require explanation on the part of the farmers
themselves, their behavior, nevertheless, is very easily remarked
by the observer. In the ordinary countryman's 561
house, for example, the man of the house and whatever older 574
men may be present occupy chairs drawn up before the 576
hearth. The hob by the fire belongs to the old couple by 517
right. The younger people, the sons and daughters, sit behind
them round the room on other chairs or on the window
seats of the rectangular kitchen, which makes up the principal
room of the usual small farmer's house. This arrangement
shows itself best in the *cuaird* or visit, where the old
men of the district drop in on neighbors and "friends" to
sit around the hearth together passing the evenings of winter
in conversation, singing, discussing the news, and telling the
old stories of legend and folklore. At the *cuaird* younger
men and women, if they attend, sit behind, usually leaving
the center of the stage to the old men, and the children
stand up behind in silent admiration. The younger men
have their own pursuits, of course, though at present the
divergence may be more marked than formerly. Lately, in [525]
Clare at least, they have taken to card playing on a gambling
basis for stakes of small livestock in the country districts. [178]

369 spection and immediate and frequent confession for girls as
834 their best defense, one sees that the pure young maidens are
208 also not without blame. They bear the taint of Eve. "Sure
522 the boys have no chance," said one woman in this respect, "for the girls always lay the blame on them." Yet these attitudes coexist together with other very hearty, casual, and sometimes ribald attitudes which make their appearance in banter, joke, and repartee even between speakers of different sex. These even take the form of taunts about prowess and mild ridicule for the possession of a greater relish than is meet, or fanciful recitation of past magnificent misdeeds. This is particularly true in the recitations of stories and adventures of persons in the ken of the community, where details of amorous desire and accomplishment are given with considerable gusto, and greeted and reiterated again and again amid hearty laughter.

Certain observers profess to find the puritanical outlook
369 on sexual matters on the increase in the countryside. The
834 country people themselves purport to see a change in their
208 own outlook. And it may be that the last generation has
[178] brought a considerable spread of Catholic moral standards with the spread of education and the opening of the countryside to urban influence.

In any event the laughter and hearty guffaws with which references of nearly any kind to sexual intercourse, sexual attraction, and childbearing are greeted, and the evident interest they evoke, are very much part of the everyday behavior of the small farmers. They do not imply in any sense an approval or acceptance of the deeds described. They are rather expressions of a very definite judgment. They are in the nature of a condemnation in which laughter is itself a sanction upon the forbidden.[1]

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[1] The authors accept readily the view of laughter as a response to a situation where socially conditioned values are threatened with upset and yet not so deeply or irrevocably broken as to bring out a full reproval. The view is well developed by Pilkington and agrees with that of Max Eastman. The tabloid reader is not

582 in the report of the Registrar-General for 1938 gives the best illustration of the culmination of the trends that mark this struggle. In that year slightly over half of all women who married (and only a negligible number of them were not making first marriages) were between thirty-five and forty-five years of age. The problem of delay in marriages seems to be reaching some sort of climax.

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● 178 It is interesting to speculate what that climax might be and what future trend of demography it may inaugurate. It is obvious that the conditions these figures point to, rooted as they are in the social order of the countryside and of the nation, are in any case beyond the reach of ordinary measures. They have marked, as we have seen, every Irish administration since Famine days, whether native or not. They are not matters of "poverty" within the reach of immediate economic policies. If "poverty" refers to hunger and an absolute low level of living, the concept does not apply at all. If it denotes rather relative standing within a community of certain values, it has some meaning. But such meaning waits for its understanding on a realization of the form of family and community these values express.

Yet the old cry about a flight from the land has arisen in Ireland once again. Until the outbreak of war in 1939, the population question, linked now with continuing unemployment in the towns and a shortage of labor in the agricultural districts, had become a football of politics once more. The new small local factories of the regime of industrialization now have their place in the controversy. The opposition in the *Dáil* are bitter against a program they believe subsidizes industry at home out of the farmer's pocket, yet leaves him unable to employ the hands his farm requires. The government finds itself in a quandary. To accept the opposition view would be to admit itself responsible for a condition far beyond its control. To put a stop to the program of industrialization would leave the incoming farm

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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sons and daughters with nothing to do at home. It would 161 mean to give up all hope of absorbing them at home. Yet to 178 build the factories is to send into the country districts the very forces of urbanism, such as wage payment, individual recompense, and a job rather than a part in group life, which wean the farm boys and girls away from a familist self-subsistence. Still the farmer of the familist tradition continues to vote the government in and continues to support the factories he must subsidize. For only by some such provision of occupations at home can he provide well for his children, as he must, by ambition and tradition.

There are farmers and farmers in Ireland. The small farmer is by all marks of social life a different person from the "big fellow." It is to be remembered that it is the little fellow who works the familist economy. Only the big fellow normally hires hands. Yet as sons and daughters leave for the towns and the town continues to make inroads on farm life, hired hands must take the vacant places. The migrant children must find new occupations with good pay and a steady hire. The process is one of continuous change at all points in the social order we are tracing out.

These population figures continue to mark, not any single cause or "factor" in social life, but the gradual, generation-slow transformation of an ancient culture, using that word in the anthropological sense. Its central core of familism is offering strong resistance to slow assault. But it changes, and along with it there changes the structure of the community that has been built upon a familistic base. The next chapters deal with these rural communities at the points of transformation: the nonfarming occupations in the countryside and the farmers' markets.

CHAPTER XII

Occupation and Status

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433 COUNTY CLARE, like other more westerly Irish counties agricultural in outlook, presents a picture in which there is little industrial activity at all, comparatively speaking, other than that involved in agriculture, trading in market towns, and administration and communication. The fact holds pretty generally for the whole of the south of Ireland.[1] Whether the inhabitants like it or not, Ireland has long been peripheral to the huge English industrial centers. It has been little more than a market and a source of foodstuffs. A western region like Clare has been nothing more. Ireland was called not very long ago "England's bread basket." But we have already seen, where economic matters have come up, that such a view of her is a bit astigmatic. Ireland was her own bread basket first, long before she was anything else.

288 ● 178 In rural Ireland outside the large cities, other industrial activity than that involved in agriculture is merely a matter of supply and service, as far as the country people are concerned. The market towns, with their fairs, their shops, their banks, and their artisans and laborers, fill functions entirely distributive in nature.

This has not always been the situation. In 1810 the economist Wakefield found domestic woolen manufacture

[1] At the time of the authors' study the De Valera government's program of industrialization had hardly begun.

a widespread industry among the country people throughout Ireland. There seems even then to have been quite a widespread cottage industry in wool and linen, later to be destroyed everywhere except in Ulster. The peasantry displayed great ingenuity at the craft. The wool of their sheep was made into frieze at home, carded, spun, woven, dyed, and consumed there. Oils essential to the weaving process were extracted from fern roots, and dyes were got from alder, walnut, oak, and elderberry. This craft survives today as a cottage industry only in remote parts of Donegal and Kerry and in the Scottish highlands and isles. Such home-spinning was once widespread, probably universal. It survived here and there down to a very late date. In Ulster and northern England the industry was gradually brought into the factory, where it laid the foundation for the industrial revolution. But in the rest of Ireland industrial production of woolens was confined to Dublin by 1840 and, as a commercial enterprise, the wool trade was dead except in the region of Belfast. A few small factories survived in several towns, for example at Limerick, Clonmel, and Bandon, but there was no life or power of expansion in them.

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Other manufactures originally native to the country repeat the story of wool. A few attempts at cotton manufacture died out. Linen suffered the same fate. At one time flax was grown extensively throughout Ireland, and a home industry of weaving linen was practiced widely in both town and countryside in many parts of the country. O'Brien [2] cites evidence that the older custom in linen making, strongest in Ulster, but not unknown elsewhere, by which weavers occupied plots of land and supplemented their income by farming, was gone by the famine time.

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[2] George O'Brien, *The Economic History of Ireland from the Union to the Famine* (London, New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1921). See also O'Brien, *The Economic History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (Dublin and London: Maunsel & Company, Ltd., 1918).

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288 [427] Otway[3] describes the weavers of Drogheda in 1840 subsisting on conacre gardens (plots hired without right other than to the current crop) in circumstances of dire poverty.

433 178 O'Brien sums up his *Economic History* by concluding that the result of the first fifty years of the nineteenth century was that Ireland abandoned all pretense of being an industrial country and came to rely on agriculture to a greater extent than at any time formerly and even than in the eighteenth century. The accounts of Ireland at the time of the famine and after it bear him out. They show a very great lack of any kind of industrial activity other than agriculture.

463 178 The petty crafts of the countryside, which never gave any promise of reaching industrial proportions as those in the town centers might have, suffered a similar decline. But with them the decline seems to have come later and to have been part of the general change brought by the industrial revolution. All the supply crafts of the countryside have now come to be concentrated in the market towns. Nevertheless, through western regions, at least, local craftsmen, often with garden plots to help them eke out a living, seem to have long continued to be part of the local scene. In the novels of Carleton written just before and after the famine, many local shoemakers, cobblers, weavers, carpenters, smiths, coopers, nailers, and other followers of small trades appear. Upon them, the agricultural population depended for much of its tools and goods for local consumption. It is impossible to determine now how many of these were rural, since censuses of occupations before 1926 do not distinguish occupations in towns from those in country districts. But these men were part of the generally greater proportions of country dwellers before the rise of towns and the opening up of the railroads during the last century.

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[3] Caesar Otway, *A Tour in Connaught* (Dublin: W. Curry, Jr., & Company, 1839).

Another very great occupational change, though it does 463
not show itself in any great numbers in census records, has 427
been connected with the disappearance of the landlord from 178
the western counties. A whole series of occupations clustering around the management of estates or the tastes of the local gentry and their families has gradually disappeared. Even the adoption of many of the conventions and habits, once exclusive marks of the Ascendancy, by other classes of the population has not served to stem the change.

If we fasten our attention directly upon determining what 463
occupations are characteristically found represented in the 178
countryside rather than in the towns in Ireland today, we get a picture of rural economy in which the followers of other occupations than farming are few indeed in the countryside. The occupations predominantly rural in Ireland are nearly exclusively those of farm ownership or farm labor. Only in recent years has there been any further development of rural pursuits to take the place of those going out with the changes brought about by modern communication and distribution of factory-made products. The chief of the new influences is not yet represented in full, even in the census of 1926. It is too recent a development. The introduction of creameries had not yet made its mark in that year. Plans for industrialization, since undertaken by the De Valera regime, had not yet even been drawn up.

To get a picture of rural life and the view of technological 463
adaptation which it entails, we can look through the figures 464
for a comparison of urban and rural industry in the years of the study.

Volume VI of the Irish census of population of 1926 entitled "Industrial Status" gives a view of the industries of the whole country and a preliminary view of the chief forms of industrial organization. Though the volume is largely concerned with unemployment, it also contains tables which classify those at work in the Free State accord-

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1. Mowing and harvesting for priest and school teacher.
2. Mowing and harvesting for an old couple without children who could not do it themselves.
3. Hauling and moving where many horses were needed, as a *meitheal* of horses, for bringing sand or seaweed manure from the coast, or moving and re-settling a family.
4. Rebuilding a house and re-settling an evicted family.
5. Collecting a *meitheal* of girls with their spinning wheels from all the community's houses to spin after shearing.
6. Collecting a *meitheal* of men and girls for various processes connected with the conversion of flax to linen.

There were probably many other more extraordinary kinds of coöperative action. But the above list exhausts those which are remembered by the local communities the authors knew in Clare and which are unconnected with the more directly reciprocal and familistic pattern of cooring. The difference between *meitheal* and *comhair* was not a contrast, however, by any means. The term *meitheal*, applied strictly, referred to the band of persons and their tools got together. Yet there was a certain unanimity in the country people's feeling that the word *meitheal* should be reserved specifically for occasions of the local community's communal action. In *meitheal* work no individual or family expected a like return.

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Community action in concert, in which bands of workers are got up for specific purposes, is nowadays very different. Most of the characteristic actions of *meitheal* remembered by the old people are no longer carried out. Just as in the case of cooring, the need of the small farmer for his fellows is no longer so great. Monetary hire is spreading into the country communities. Yet even today the schoolteacher and the priest are donated services at hay harvesting occasionally, though nowadays schoolteacher and priest rely no longer upon bits of land and garden for support but upon fixed monetary salaries from state or church. Such aid is of little importance in their economies. Likewise, old-age

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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pensions and other benefits have removed the necessity 571 of action by *meitheal* for the support of the aged and childless. 178 General prosperity and the spread of machinery and tools have made it unnecessary for such concerted action in other cases, and local self-sufficiency is no longer so complete.

Nevertheless, the foundation of mutual relations between 476 members of the local community upon which *meitheal* was based still exists. 571 It can be called into play in emergency or under special circumstance still. Not all the townsman's accusation that the spirit of self-help and self-sufficiency has gone out of the country people is true by any means. They still will buckle to a community task, if necessity forces action, quite willingly. But they have learned that they have a voice nowadays in the kind of activity to which public funds and public works shall be put. This awareness is part of the extension inward into the community of the lines of relationship with persons and institutions external to the farm community which is so characteristic of the age. Such relationships are now made use of where before there were none of them beyond appeal to a landlord.

Some description of the former kind of activity might 476 be of interest here, though it is in the nature of a digression. 571 The techniques of the last century, particularly those of wool 286 and flax, were different from those of today; yet the situation is in other respects quite like that of today as far as the organization of persons in the community is concerned. The age groups of old and young, the sex division of activity between men and women, and the reciprocities between family groups and the direction of the community in the hands of the old men were even more marked than they are today. But nothing fundamental has changed except the techniques.

The following is an account of the older custom in weaving:

121 172 settlement patterns is somewhat doubtful. There is a reasonable chance of eventual discovery of the origin of settlement on this site, but from the beginning it was realized that only by good fortune would the relation of the clachan to other settlement forms, in particular the Irish raths, be uncovered. However, since relatively little of a substantive nature is known about Irish peasant life until as late as the end of the eighteenth century, any information on the material culture of the inhabitants of this site will be of value. There does not seem to be great hope of uncovering any field systems that may have surrounded the settlement, but similar work elsewhere might be more fortunate.

121 103 Place-name evidence provides a second, if somewhat tentative, line of investigation. For instance, J. B. Arthurs has suggested that *baile* (bally), the Gaelic word for home place or townland, may be of pre-Goidelic origin, and that where "ballys" are numerous, indigenous people had been left mainly undisturbed by the Goidelic expansion.[28] If this can be firmly established, it will immediately suggest a parallel with the possible dual system of landholding previously mentioned, particularly since the names of many surviving clachans contain the element "bally." Certainly there is need for further research on this topic.

121 Aerial photography offers a third line. Irish archeologists have long been aware of its importance[29] and have illustrated excavation reports with photographs taken from the air; but, except locally, this method has not yet been employed systematically in the study of Irish rural settlement. If suitable photographs were available, it is likely that they would illuminate the history of fields and farms in Ireland. At the least a detailed study of the available air photographs would guide further field work on the ground.

Disappearance of the Old System

● 178 311 361 Such methods of investigation can only hope to produce a few clues in what must be an exercise in detection; and, in a sense, it is some relief to find that the factors involved in the final disappearance of the infield-outfield system and its associated settlement pattern are somewhat clearer than the earlier history of these features. The regional details, however, still remain obscure, since the enclosure of the open fields in Ireland required no parlia-

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[28] Quoted in Evans, Irish Folk Ways [see preceding footnote], p. 27.

[29] D. A. Chart: Air-Photography in Northern Ireland, *Antiquity*, Vol. 4, 1930, pp. 453-459; J. Raftery: Air-Photography and Archaeology, *Journ. Royal Soc. of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Vol. 74, 1944, pp. 119-123. Proudfoot (Settlement and Economy in Co. Down [see footnote 18 above]) used air photographs in his study of County Down, as did the government-sponsored archeological survey of the same county.

7:Johnson K-4 (no date) 1958
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

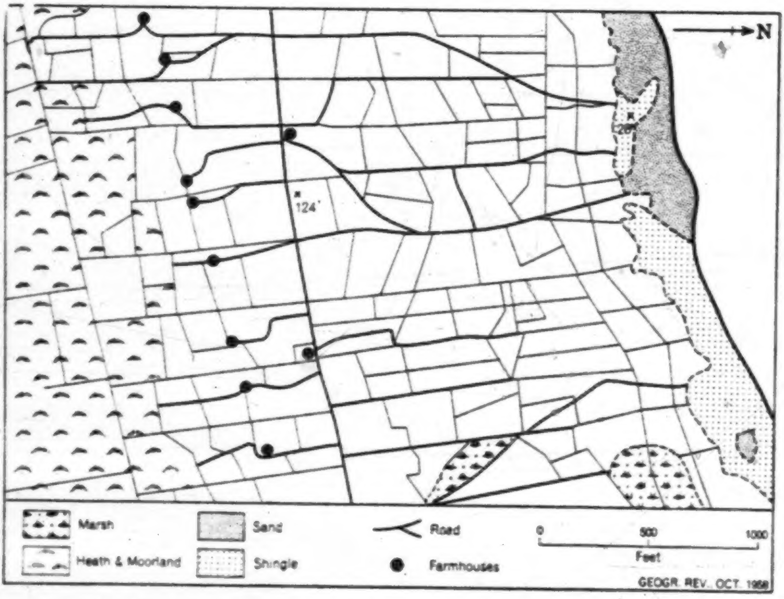

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FIG. 4—"Striped" farms and fields in County Kerry. (Based on the Ordnance Survey, by permission of the Minister of Finance, Republic of Ireland.)

mentary authorization. Although it is rarely possible to obtain information 178
on the methods and precise date of consolidation, the destruction of the 361
system can be explained, in broad terms, by its growing inefficiency and by 311
the dissemination of new agricultural techniques.

Some of the unsatisfactory aspects of rundale agriculture sprang from the steady growth of the population of Ireland, which continued from sometime in the middle of the eighteenth century until the Great Famine of 1845–1847.[30] This increase led to a constant encroachment on various uncultivated areas, a process in which the general adoption of the potato as a subsistence crop played a major part.[31] But the "waste" lands brought under cultivation had not been completely unused, since often they were grazed by livestock under a well-developed transhumance.[32] This seasonal movement was important to the rural economy, because efficient rundale farming required that the animals be removed from the unfenced cultivated strips during the growing

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[30] K. H. Connell: The Population of Ireland, 1750–1845 (Oxford, 1950). 113

[31] *Idem:* The Colonization of Waste Land in Ireland, 1780–1845, *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, Ser. 2, Vol. 3, 1950–1951, pp. 44–71.

[32] J. M. Graham: Transhumance in Ireland, *The Advancement of Sci.*, Vol. 10, 1953–1954, pp. 74–79.

[Text continues on p. 565]

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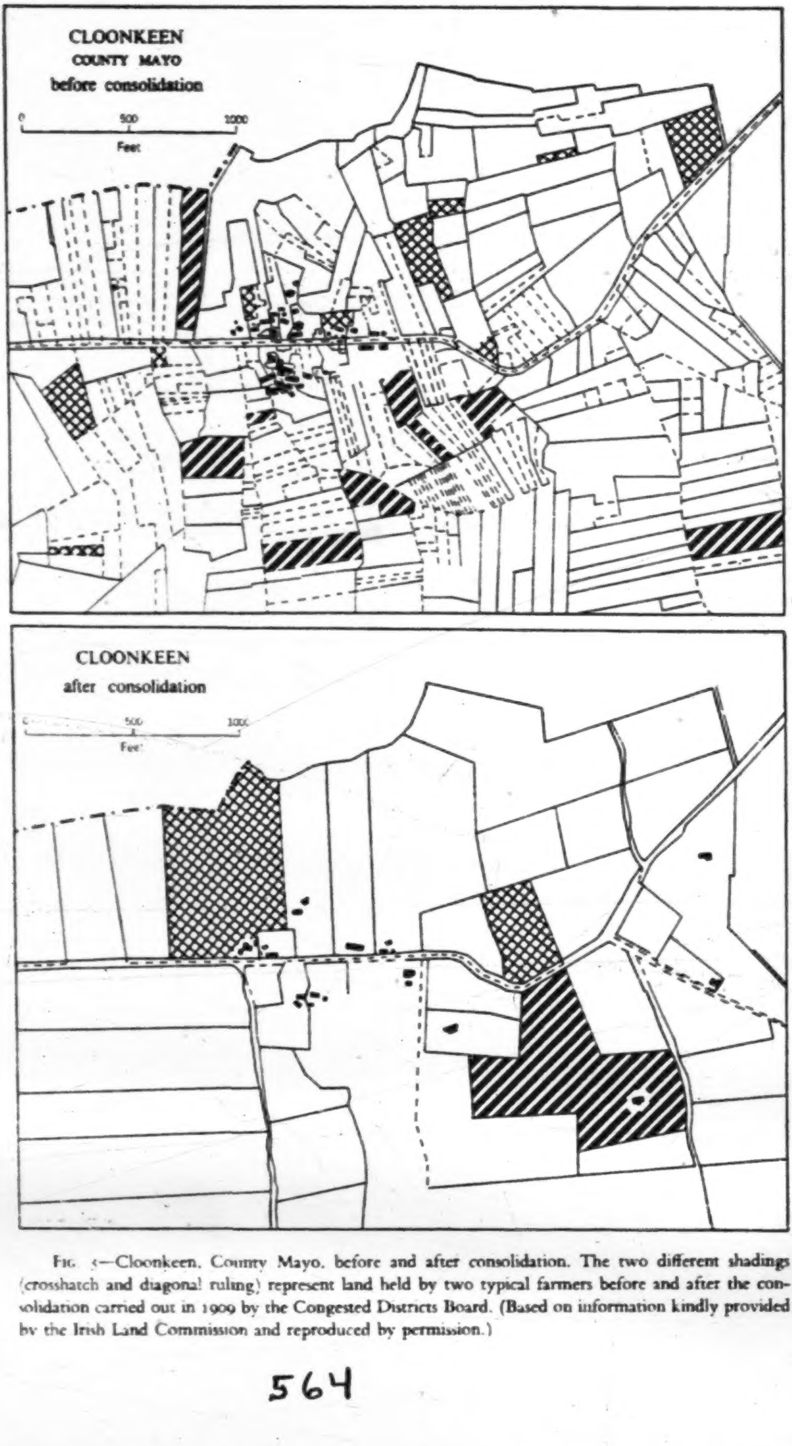
CLOONKEEN
COUNTY MAYO
before consolidation
0
500
1000
Feet
CLOONKEEN
after consolidation
0
500
1000
Feet

FIG. 5—Cloonkeen, County Mayo, before and after consolidation. The two different shadings (crosshatch and diagonal ruling) represent land held by two typical farmers before and after the consolidation carried out in 1909 by the Congested Districts Board. (Based on information kindly provided by the Irish Land Commission and reproduced by permission.)

7:Johnson K-4 (no date) 1958
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

season; and the end of transhumance made the working of the system more 178
difficult. Similarly, the increase of population led to a remarkable growth in 311
the size of many clachans, which often made life in them increasingly inconvenient. 361
Squabbles over rights of way and other petty affairs were common, and there was a growing awareness that the old methods of farming were becoming unsatisfactory. The introduction of new crops and rotations gave the *coup de grâce* to the efficiency of the system; for they were difficult to integrate into it, and therefore agricultural improvement was retarded.

The impetus behind the changes, however, usually did not come from the farmers themselves but from their landlords. Indeed, it seems possible that peasant resistance to the destruction of rundale was a considerable factor in nineteenth-century opposition to landlordism.[33] Often landlords, intent on improving their estates, would put whole areas of land into the melting pot, consolidating holdings and sometimes evicting the surplus population. Frequently the new holdings were arranged up and down the slope of the land, an arrangement that has resulted in the characteristic striped appearance of much of the modern Irish landscape. Although long, narrow strips were probably not the best possible farm shape (Fig. 4), they represented a compromise between the traditional system of allocating each farmer a share of every quality of land and the landlords' demands for greater efficiency. At the same time the old clachan groups were broken up and new farmhouses were built, each within its own land. In such a way most of the better agricultural land was converted, but at the end of the nineteenth century various areas, particularly in the west of Ireland, still remained under the old system or some modification of it. This hard core has now been largely eliminated by government action. First the British government attempted a general improvement of living conditions in western Ireland by means of the Congested Districts Board, whose work included the reorganization of agricultural holdings (Fig. 5);[34] after 1922 and the establishment of the Irish Free State the task was taken over by the Irish Land Commission.[35]

In some areas, however, the disappearance of clachan settlement was part 161
of a natural process in the late nineteenth century. The population of Ireland 361
started to decrease after the Great Famine of the 1840's, and even in areas 178
where there had been little rearrangement of holdings some clachans became

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[33] See, for example, the Devon Commission Report [see footnote 11 above], Part 1, Appendix 14, p. 58. 113

[34] T. W. Freeman: The Congested Districts of Western Ireland, *Geogr. Rev.*, Vol. 33, 1943, pp. 1–14.

[35] On this aspect of the Land Commission's work see "The Consolidation of Fragmented Agricultural Holdings" (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Washington, 1950), Chapter 3, "Relief of Rural Congestion in Ireland."

7:Johnson K-4 (no date) 1958

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uninhabited and in others only a single family remained. In these areas, too, partial consolidation was carried out by adding the fields of an emigrating farmer to those of some neighbor or relative who remained at home. The decrease in population had a more general influence as well: throughout Ireland it prevented former conditions from reasserting themselves. Everywhere there was diminished pressure on the land, and the growth of larger farms rather than renewed subdivision.

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There are still gaps, then, in the story of Irish rural settlement. Until documentary and field evidence slowly yields the missing chapters, the past will remain a subject for speculation rather than for confident explanation. The rural systems of previous centuries are now disappearing, but the surviving remains may hold clues to former conditions, and their interpretation remains a continuing challenge.

the country-people who marry latest. One can 582
range the country in something of a scale in this regard. The more numerous in a county the numbers of small holdings, roughly, the later marriage takes place, and the greater number of bachelors, particularly males, of all ages, there are. Late marriage and bachelorhood are characteristics today of the countryman's way of life.

In the problem presented by these statistics, the 167
structural approach to the countryman's way of 582
life can bring a new illumination. It throws into 178
relief the human setting in which economic and historical changes have run their course.

After the terrible disaster of the Famine, agriculture underwent a change. Canadian and Argentine wheat forced Irish land into cattle production. The great land clearances took place, turning out the population to make way for pasture. Then the small farmer followed the large into pasturage for dry cattle, on a lesser scale, and the milch cow declined. Small towns and crossroads distributing centres and the railroads sprang up all through the country; and abroad, the roaring industrial expansion, first of England and then of America, gave opportunities denied at home. Through all this: through curtailment of employment at home, through substitution of cattle for men upon the land, through denial of local opportunity, the stream of emigration kept its steady flow.

Through all this, too, the figures of Irish mar-

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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riage kept pace. Age of marriage was normal in the year of the first census. In 1841 there was a normally low percentage of the unmarried in the population, and men and women married as early as they do in the United States today. At each decennial census afterwards, marriage was a little later and the unmarried a little more numerous. Through all the welter of changes, the figures grew steadily toward wider and wider spread celibacy.

Then when the economic and political tides turned, the human setting still endured. The clearances ceased; land reform won security of tenure; years of prosperity after 1870 brought an income that could be used more and more at home, as lowered rents spread and freehold was assured. Finally, the war brought undreamed-of prosperity and on its heels the strength for revolution and civil war. The milch cow came back to a position from which it had only retreated very little; dairying could be organized and come to vie with beef cattle as a market outlet. Finally, as a last step, industry began to make its call at home.

In all this flow of circumstance who can say what factor determined the numerical count of Irish population? Emigration went on as before, checked this year, hurried the next, until, perhaps from external check, the flow grew less and less.[1]

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[1] Preliminary reports of the current (1936) census indicate emigration still continues, though now largely directed toward Great Britain rather than overseas.

On the other hand, the corollary check on the population—late marriage—did not lag. It still grew. In the census of 1911 it reached its peak and has held it since. It alone shows no sign of falling-off in response to new economics and better days. For a social system is no brittle, changeable thing. Its adjustments to change and circumstance are a lesson, not in economics, but in the tenacity of human sentiment and human habit. Late marriage in Ireland can be associated with the reluctance of the old couple to renounce their leadership. It is part of the long struggle to acquire means to portion children. The closed corporation of the family cannot be dispersed until it is possible to establish a new one. The self-sufficiency of the group makes it always difficult to destroy. And now, today, the identification of a single family with a single individual farm prevents the setting up of more than one new group upon the land. 167 178 ● 582

So, when subdivision of holdings ceased after the Famine, Irish familism made its adaptation. The local community could not any longer settle its sons at home; it could no longer divide its land among them. Yet, unless it were to die it must live on. I say must, for a social system is co-extensive with the lives of its members. The Polynesians, in their island paradises, might die out nation by nation when their culture crashed, bled by a malady stronger than foreign germs or foreign guns. The Irish countrymen were tougher.

167 In living on, the system could still mould the
●178 lives of its members. As prosperity arrived, and
582 land agitation fixed the attention of the farmer, 'land' became more and more a central value. Irish rural familism felt more and more strongly the threefold identification of 'land', 'blood' and local standing. Where land, alliance and prestige all follow the same lines, in marriage, the group finds its coherence in, and centres its tightly woven bonds round, that crucial reorganization of social life.

So, the 'landless' and the 'backward' must die out. In rural Ireland, however, it is not men but families which are so forced to their deaths. "Backward places do not grow big fortunes", we remember. That homely phrase is full of social meaning. The all-too-human drives for social rise, for prestige, leave them behind and marriageless. And in a familistic world, celibacy leads to extinction.

000 With the homely phrase we enter a new field in social life, yet one just as central to the way of rural Ireland. This is the broad area of social stratification. Under the awkward term are subsumed the judgments man makes among his fellows upon rank, upon prestige, upon inferiority and superiority, and the behaviours that embody them. All societies exhibit them; all organize them in one way or another. Even the animals show analogous behaviours. They practise dominance and submit

another guise. They are controls upon the system. 182
They are unconscious patterns of human action 554
whose social function is to ensure conformities and 565
to enforce cohesions against internal disruption and external defection. Much of the fate of human beings, both at their own hands and at those of their fellows, conforms to the controls the community exerts in response to the system of customs and values by which it builds itself and in which it ensures its preservation.

Tragedy, for example, lies in the fate of one 463
romantic human type in rural Ireland. In the last 178
century before the introduction of railroads and the growth of towns, each local community had its local artisans. Tailors, weavers, carpenters, shoemakers, smiths, followed their lifelong trades and supplied local needs. Open any account of rural Ireland before the last quarter of the last century, such as the tales of William Carleton, and you will be rewarded with a full-blooded picture of this lusty crew. Their crafts were very primitive, but their place was sure. Since then, nearly all of them, except the smith, their peer, have been swept away before the skill of townsmen and factory. These men supplied their neighbours, lived among them, were an integral part of rural life. When poverty struck too deep, they became peripatetics, like the wandering singers, scholars, fiddlers, spalpeen labourers, petty hawkers and beggars who swarmed the roads of Ireland. The world of fairy-tale was

● 178 463 not remote from the farmers who knew these men. Rumpelstiltskin, in a Gaelic dress, was at one's very doors.

In remote communities some few of these survive. Where they do, the community can still make use of them. Commissioning them follows a traditional pattern of gifts and courtesies little resembling conventional monetary commerce. Their skill descends, like the farmer's farm, from father to son; it is 'in the blood'. Their surplus children must disperse to towns and in emigration. For theirs too is a familistic world.

178 463 556 Unless they marry within their own fast-diminishing numbers, they too must have land and fortune. Now and again one of them rises in the world. He acquires land, he sets aside a fortune, he marries sons and daughters on the land. Year by year, his trade goes into the discard, till one fine day he is a full-fledged small farmer.

463 554 But such upward mobility is rare and difficult. Economic change has swept his skill aside. The local artisan is more often a landless man, with nothing but a garden patch. The services he performs, however indispensable, do not give him equality with his neighbours. His standing is low, though his person is welcome. A farmer might 'put a son to a trade', perhaps, and often did not long ago. But it would be the lame son, the one not 'suited to the land'.

So today one finds broken remnants of this local

369 571 seemed to the Commissioners a petty commercial credit system.

452 626 They forgot, perhaps, that the landlord was removed from the identifications of sentiment and reciprocity which bound Irishman to Irishman and in which the ties between the countryside and the towns at last are formed. For a favour done is a favour received; and the debt is no more than the monetary sign of a social obligation. The 'confidence' its members have in the rural credit system is their trust in a social order.

178 668 443 What then can one say of that figure of Irish public life who has contributed so much to humour and story on the one hand, and to the bitterness and cynicism of his opponents on the other? I refer to the shopkeeper or publican in politics. His enemies have a stronger name for him; they call him a saloon-keeper and heap moral coals on his head. His friends, on the other hand, know him as a shrewd and genial soul.

[121] The student of social behaviour and the types it produces cannot and must not join either the moralists or the sentimentalists. He must appraise only for the facts; knowledge is not an ethical judgment, it is the analysis of what is. Those who occupy a social place may be good or bad, brilliant or pitiful; only the place can interest the anthropologist.

This type, the shopkeeper-publican in politics, reached its zenith in Ireland in the years from 1898 to the Sinn Fein times. Only in recent years, since

the 1916 Rebellion, have other broad social classes 178
of what used to be called the 'Irishry' made a substantial 668
contribution to organized political life, 443
though all of them figured well enough in patriotic rebellion. 1898 is the crucial date, because then the landlords were displaced in the management of local affairs. The older Grand Jury system, based upon large property qualifications, gave way to the elective County Councils.

At about the same time, land war had broken the last remaining ties between the landlords, as a class, and the social order of the countryside. The growth of the towns since the Famine had by then well established the new relation between the market-town and its rural hinterland which I have described. In the new situation, the shopkeeper and the publican could best represent the united interests of the social order of which they were, in their own way, an important part.

All nations infuse political forms with their own genius. The Irish were not slow to do so; they soon made their own infusion. The reciprocities of a familistic order, in which sentiment and habit found effective organization, were the materials they had at hand. The bonds between town and countryside provided channels through which the infusion could flow.

For, as I have tried to show you, the shop- 443
keeper-publican occupied then, and still does, a 661
strategic place in the organization of the country- 626

181 backward and upward toward the dead and the
183 ancestral. The community bestows ever greater
888 status and influence as one progresses further and
776 further toward the age-grade of the old, in whom
775 tradition and precedent are preserved and expressed.
In the sphere of credence and emotion the fairy faith acts to the same end and is so designed. The design, in this instance as in all the others, is not conscious; no one has planned it. It is a design drawn from the social order and acting back upon it. Its imagery is traditional, but its efficacy is of the present. And for that reason it lives.

Thus, in the identification between the old, the dead and the influences which affect the goods, the conducts and the values of the countryman's life, the symbolic order is completed. Folk-belief, in the ancient fairy-cult, with its age-old imagery, makes a complete emotional synthesis, overlying and reacting back upon the sentiment and habit out of which it springs again and again with each generation that learns the old way of life. Consequently, each new generation works a change upon it; elements of the synthesis undergo constant re-embellishment and shift of emphasis. Both old and young are controlled by it, but each in a different way. Today the young are sceptical and a little rebellious; they repudiate much of the
● [178] older imagery. All that the Church condemns in
the 'pisherogues', they also condemn. Today folk-belief is undergoing marked change like all else in this world, like all else in Ireland.

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belief is undergoing marked change like all else in this world, like all else in Ireland.

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But that does not mean the death-knell of folklore, as some students of folklore seem to think. Far from that, it means only that a symbolic order like any growth in human life must change and grow onward. New forms and new imagery will grow up to clothe in emotional terms the necessary reformations of habit and sentiment in social life, and new syntheses will fashion new belief, changing the old or supplanting it inch by inch.

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One can see this process at work in rural Ireland today. Those who repudiate the fairies repudiate only the outmoded symbols, the outworn images. They do not deny the necessity of a symbolic order in their own lives. The student of man is coming to think today that they could not do so, because no people can. There must always be some socially efficacious organization of the sentiments of social life in the logic of belief and imagery. Belief provides first of all a conception of life; then, and then only, does it carry on to become a conception of the world. But life among men includes emotional attitudes at once very necessary and very satisfying; one can starve the spirit only so far. And for that reason the logic of a social order is not that of science and prose, it is that of emotion. Consequently, those of the countryside who repudiate the older symbols merely demand that their emphasis be shifted. They do not cry out for bald

178 183 science, nor abandon symbolism. They merely insist upon new symbols.

There are currently two directions in which the shift can be made. And, as usual, the popular mind has room for both movements; for they are related, and both are compatible with the countryman's social order. The first direction leads more deeply into the greater Faith of the countryman. Religion can come more and more to provide the emotional balances necessary in social life. Thus Catholicism is a growing, spreading force in the countryside, overtaking many an area of the mind where the 'pisherogues' still flourished till recently. The second direction leads to a reaffirmation, in ever stronger form, of that part of belief in which the dead and death are related to the disturbances and the securities of social life. After all, this is one of the indispensable cores of faith, and it expresses most forcefully the organization of life upon tradition and continuities. It can be retained even if the more picturesque imagery must go.

178 183 775 It is for that reason that the fairy gives way more and more to the ghost in rural Ireland today. Dead 'Tans' now patrol the roads where the banshee may have walked. In stressing the part of the dead in folk-belief, the necessary synthesis between emotional associations and social life can still persist and respond to change and growth. The ghost does his work as well as does the fairy, though he is perhaps less given to poetic dress.

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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Flax is virtually confined to Northern Ireland, where 248
the bulk of it is produced on the rich soils of the Bann and 244
the Main. Turnips and mangels are pretty widely distributed but sugar-beet is mainly grown in the valley of the Barrow.

In recent years about 60 % of the surface of Ireland has 311
been devoted to stock-raising, and when it is remembered 231
that a large proportion of the corn and root crops also goes to feed stock it will be seen that the pastoral industries predominate. Dairy cows, an essential part of the equipment of the peasant farm, are widely distributed, but in the commercial production of butter there is a strong concentration around the foci of Cork and Limerick, where co-operative creameries are favoured by the relative ease of transport, for example in the fertile "Golden Vale." These dairying regions also stand out as beef-producing areas, for Irish cattle are dual purpose animals bred for meat as well as milk. But the best fattening lands run round the northern and eastern sides of the Central Plain, and County Meath is justly famed in this connexion.

The dry limestone pastures of east Galway and hilly tracts such as the Wicklows and the Sperrins are outstanding as areas of sheep-rearing, and surprising numbers are kept on the slopes of the western mountains, the wool going to make the homespuns of the Gaeltacht. Pig-breeding is heaviest in the south-west, where the dairying industry supplies skimmed milk. As a domestic animal attached to the small farms, the
pig is by no means so typically Irish as is often assumed. [178]
But one often comes across empty pigsties, some of them of archaic construction (Chapter 9) which testify to their
importance in the past: one minor factor in the decline is the [273]
fact that in the days of active poteen-making pigs were conveniently fed on the waste products.

On the other hand poultry of all kinds have maintained 235
and even increased their popularity. The old breed of hen still favoured in the west is a small black bird, active, intelligent and extremely domesticated. The potato has encouraged the keeping of poultry, and Arthur Young

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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popular, which was for the most part within the last hundred 493
years.

It may be suggested that the solid disc wheel influenced the shape of the spoked wheel, both in its narrow rim and small diameter and in the fact that it has very little "dish," and it cannot be denied that the slide car lives on in the structure of the modern cart. This consists essentially of two long "runners" which form in turn the front shafts, the side supports of the body and the back shafts or "trams." These projections are everywhere present and in some districts are as much as 3½ feet long. In its simplest form then, the cart is merely a flat platform resembling a slide-car on wheels, but it can be fitted with sides to make a "box-car," and this has become the standard shape in certain counties. It is now often fitted with old motor wheels and tyres to make a "soft
car." Details of decorative work and styles of painting are [531]
markedly regional: in the Glens the body is blue and the wheels red: the front board of the cart has a lozenge design panelled or painted in red. Another subject which calls for [492]
investigation is the distribution and significance of horse-brasses and other trappings. They represent a very ancient tradition, as finds of the Early Iron Age demonstrate.

During the period of agricultural advancement in the 493
17-eighties several landlords introduced English waggons and 178
tried to popularize them for farm work, but they were soon abandoned; the one-horse car was found to be much better fitted to the soft roads. Small things, whether we consider vehicles, livestock, fields or villages, seem to characterize Ireland. Except in towns and for processional purposes the four-wheeled vehicle has no place here: we are in the "two-wheeled" culture region.

We may close this chapter with a few comments on roads 491
and tracks. Very little is known about ancient Irish roads, and although the use of chariots implies a knowledge of road-building one is inclined to be sceptical about the elaborate road system reputed to have existed in early Celtic times. To map these tracks without careful field-study is a popular but

412 184 [178] While it is difficult to estimate the antiquity of the two-eared spade tradition in Ulster and Leinster, its spread into the west has taken place in the last half century. The decline in the use of the loy is symbolic of the disappearance of the old fashions, and they tend to vanish together because the culture pattern is a closely interwoven web. Thus it was considered in Donegal a century ago that the new iron spades "would be useless," since few workers had shoes: the wooden spade was adapted to the bare feet.

391 412 The spade-maker is called on to turn out other types of agricultural tools, spades, shovels and forks. There is the very narrow tapered draining spade and the heavy "mountain draining spade" used in the moorland areas of the north and west (Fig. 64): its great "shark's head" blade is 17 inches long and almost as wide. Occasionally he is asked to rough out a flachter (Fig. 85), which the country smith finishes into the required shape, or it may be, in the south-west, a graffan or heavy hoe (Chapter 10). But as the turf-cutting season comes round most of his energies go into the making of turf slanes (Chapter 15). Of shovels there are several different types, generally classified into two shapes, round-pointed and square-pointed: the latter kind is favoured in the west. There is also the tanged shovel of Co. Wexford. The shovels are long-handled, but short handles are used for special purposes. The welding of the socket in the thin hard steel of the shovels is one of the smith's most difficult tasks (Fig. 65).

412 Then there are short and long-handled square-shouldered digging forks with three or with four prongs (Fig. 65), and the round-shouldered manure-forks or graips, the prongs of which may be round, oval, or in old-fashioned work, square. There are drags for unloading manure, for gathering wrack (Fig. 103), for cleaning drains and gathering stones. Hay-forks may be tanged or strap-hafted, with 4-foot or 5-foot handles and so on. Some country-made forks are illustrated in Fig. 66. It may be added that hayforks with wooden prongs cut from the solid have also been used in the past. Some of the loys, like the old Ulster kib, are essentially wooden spades merely shod with iron, and even this was dispensed with in sandy soils. Wooden

585 "straw-boys" go round with long straw masks on, and if they do not
get either money or liquor will threaten to break the windows and
furniture of the house. The women marry very young, from fifteen
582 years upwards; and, if not settled in life by twenty or so, they usually
emigrate.

Infants are given butter immediately after birth, and are carefully
844 watched, lest they should be "taken away" or changed. For some
similar reason a parturient woman has a string tied round the wrist or
one of the fingers. All the wood in a house is carefully put outside if
763 the death of one of the inmates is thought to be imminent; and if it
should occur the neighbours dread to give wood to make the coffin, as
they believe that the person who does so will be the next to die; and
if the plank of which the coffin is to be made is not taken down from
the loft where it generally is, before the person dies, no inducement
can make them use it for the purpose. The people never bury their
764 dead on a Monday, nor on the day of the week in which the Feasts
of the Holy Innocents has fallen for that year. They have a great
[762] horror of suicides, and believe that if one were to be buried in the
graveyard it would cause the other corpses to turn over on their faces.

A wake is held the night before the funeral, on those who have
died abroad or been lost at sea, when the news arrives; but owing to
● [178] the influence brought to bear on the people by the clergy in this
matter, it is now only attended by relatives of the deceased, and the
character of the ceremony is much altered, most of the old games, the
mock marriage, &c., being altogether obsolete, while the insobriety,
formerly common, is now a thing of the past. At the funeral the coffin
[482] is carried out the back door, and is followed by the mourners. On
reaching the graveyard it is carried thrice round the old church in the
direction of the sun, and as soon as the grave is reached all those
attending the funeral scatter and go to pray at the graves of their own
relatives, which, having done, they raise the keen, beginning at the
person farthest from the open grave.

The Rev. E. O'Growney, who has generously placed at my disposal
a number of notes taken during a visit to these islands, thus describes a
funeral he witnessed in Inishbofin:—"The old Irish funeral *caoine*
is still used in its full perfection. I happened to be engaged in the
church of St. Colman, deciphering a peculiar Latin inscription there,
when a large number of people, chiefly women, brought the body of an
infant for interment. While the body was being interred the women
764 scattered about the churchyard, each going to the grave of her own
533 friends. Those farthest from the newly-made grave began a low

173 began to sink.[1] Suspecting that the bell was the cause of their misfortune, they threw it into the sea, and the ship was saved. Next morning, when some of the islanders were searching for sea-weed on the shore, they found the bell lying broken among the rocks. This [778] relic has long ago disappeared, having been cut up into pieces which were worn as amulets, most of which have been taken to America, but it is said that some are still kept as great treasures by some old people in Inishbofin, who refuse to show them to anyone.

Richard O'Flaherty, writing in 1684, makes mention of this bell ("H-Iar Connaught," p. 117) . . . "Inisark is of the same property with Bofin and the saint therein worshipped, St. Leo; of whose reliques is a bell there extant."

773 823 *St. Leo's Foot-print.*—There is pointed out an impression in the rock on which Cloghan Leo is built, which is said to be the imprint of the saint's foot, and the people's explanation of how it came there is, that when he had finished building the cloghan he had to leap down, as he had no ladder, and alighting on the rock he left the print of his foot upon it, where it still remains.

173 There is a tradition on the islands of a large treasure of gold being hidden on Davillaun (a small island of the Bofin group), on which a large vessel of the Spanish Armada was wrecked, and some of the people claim to know exactly where it is. There are also many stories about Lord Nelson, under whom several men from these islands served, and wild tales of the old smugglers; and a very narrow passage between two dangerous rocks through which a daring smuggler once steered his vessel, and thus baffled his pursurers, is pointed out.

ARCHÆOLOGY.

● 178 [172] Though making no pretentions to being an archæologist, yet as an inquiry of this sort would be imperfect without, at least, a partial description of the antiquities of the place, I hope that the notes hereunder given may, in some degree at least, supply the want.

1. *Survivals.*—In these the locality is comparatively rich, a good many old implements and methods of working, which have become extinct in other places, being still common. Such are the continuance of the use of plants and lichens as dyes, and some details of dress, such as the old blue cap, &c., which have been referred to before.

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[1] One version of the story states that the ship had got as far as the Bay of Biscay!

776 the fairies. A few years ago the cattle on this farm became ill, and one after another died; the people of the house consulted a "fairy woman," who told them that the cause of the disease was the defiling of the fairies play-ground, by allowing a manure heap on the south side of the house, but that if this were removed that all would be well. Her advice was taken, and from that day forth the illness ceased. Dirty water should not be thrown out at night for fear of offending the fairies.

178 189 Many of the old customs mentioned by writers of the earlier part of the century have become extinct. People from the mainland no longer bury their dead on Inishglora, and some other customs connected with this island have died out since it became uninhabited; the first that two people could not go together into one of the ruined cells or cloghans without breaking bread between them, neglect of which would cause one of the two to die within the year; the other that every visitor should kiss the wooden statute of St. Brendan.[1] Though these customs have gone, many still continue to exist—wakes, funeral customs, and straw-boys at weddings have been already mentioned; wren hunting is practised, and the "wran-bush" carried round on St. Stephen's Day, as in most other parts of Ireland. On St. John's Eve bon-fires, or Beltain fires, are lighted, and people used to jump through the smoke over them when they got low; many still endeavour on these occasions to take home a live coal to kindle their own fires with.

788 The sign of the cross is made over the mouth when yawning to avert evil. Hair-cuttings are carefully put away in a hole in the wall in order that strength may be preserved.

231 432 The sale of cattle is completed by dipping a stick in dirt, and marking the beasts therewith.

787 Girls sometimes try means of discovering what their future husband will be like. The following is a specimen:—On the first sight of the first new moon of the New Year, the girl kneels down and says seven "Our Fathers" and seven "Hail Marys"; then she takes some of the clay from under her left knee and puts it into a left stocking, which she then buries until retiring at night, when she takes it up and sleeps on it to dream of her future husband.

832 There is a love charm of a rather gruesome character which is still

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[1] It used to be the custom for all ships passing Inishglora to lower top sails in honour of St. Brendan; and it was believed that any man who thrice lifted the statue in his arms was rendered capable of helping women in difficult labours.—O'DONOVAN.

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895

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Kilmore

778 his death to his interference with this figure. An Inishkea man spoke about the matter with much indignation even after the lapse of years, and said that they had never known misfortune or hunger in the island until after the distruction of this *neewoge*.

Many different accounts have been given of the image itself. One writer (C. O.) states that it was a stone figure of rude workmanship, and that it was dressed in a suit of homespun, renewed every year.

The description given by those who have seen it agree in stating that it was not a statue but a small flat stone. One informant believed it to be part of the head of a stone figure. This was enveloped in a small bag of homespun, which was replaced when it got old and soiled, and was kept in a blind window or recess in the wall in one of the houses.

776 *St. Brendan and the Devil.*—During my visit to Inishglora some of the Inishkea fishermen, who were camped there at the time, pointed out that no grass grew on a part of the island, and gave the following explanation :—St. Brendan was one day disturbed in his devotions by the devil, who appeared to him in the form of a beautiful girl and tempted him. The saint indignantly repulsed the temptress, and drove her towards the end of the island, blessing the soil as he went, but at the point where the grass ends, Satan changed his form and assumed the shape of a ram, which so astonished the saint that in his excitement he ceased blessing and gave chase to the evil one who ran to the rocks and jumped into the sea. The unblessed land is that on which the grass does not grow.

VI. ARCHÆOLOGY.

172 178 The few notes made in this section do not purport to be fully descriptive, but merely to indicate the nature of the antiquities of the region, which are of importance in the study of the people as bearing on the history of their past, and to direct the attention of archaeologists to the quantity of material worthy of study and record which is still to be met with in this part of county Mayo.

178 1. *Survivals.*—The district is comparatively rich in these, though many articles in use in the localities previously reported on are now quite extinct in Erris. The primitive condition of many of the houses, the absence of chimneys, and the custom of taking cattle into the dwellings have already been referred to.

178 412 The quern is still in use in several houses, especially on the islands and in the remoter localities, though now only employed for

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
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Kilmore

178 grinding barley for cattle food, or in some few cases for malt for
[412] *poteen.*

Hooped piggins are used in many houses, as also are sheepskin
[415] sieves (*borans*).

The spinning-wheel for wool is of the usual Connaught type, with-
178 out treadle, and is made in the district. The cards used for the wool
283 are imported, being all made in Dublin. The hand-looms are the same as used elsewhere in the West, and of rather rude construction, though capable of turning out good work.

287 A machine of rather primitive design is used for compressing cloth. It was made by its user, and has been working for many years.

Rush-lights are used in some houses, and in others the rude lamp
373 already referred to, which is evidently merely a reproduction in tinware of the old stone or iron lamp for fish oil.

The stills employed by the makers of poteen are constructed of tin,
273 and of simple but effective design. They are made in the owners houses by tinkers.

The curragh, of the usual form, is the boat most in use, and seems
501 likely to hold its own. It is now covered with tarred canvas, but seventy years ago horse-skins were used for this purpose. A large stone is often used as an anchor for small boats.

2. *Antiquities* may be divided into two classes—(*a*) Architectural
172 remains, and (*b*) Articles of use or ornament. (*a*) Architectural remains are still very numerous, though many of the most interesting have altogether disappeared; of these the most noticeable was the *Oileach*, the fortified seat of the chiefs of Hy-Fiachrach, which was situated at Elly in the Mullet, on or near the position of Bingham's Castle. Several castles belonging to the Barrets and Burkes have also been entirely destroyed.

Some of the ruins still remaining are of pagan origin, others are ecclesiastical structures. The principal pagan antiquities are the duns or forts, both stone and earthen, the monuments, &c. There are several duns, both within the district actually treated of in this Paper, and along the coast line of the surrounding country; those within the Mullet are *Dunnamoe*, a stone fort of large size, built on a rocky promontory overhanging the sea, and formerly one of the most perfect on this coast; of late years, however, it has suffered severely, the greater part of the wall has been broken down to afford building material for houses and walls about Belmullet; the guard-chambers mentioned by O'Donovan and others are now almost destroyed, the outworks thrown down. One part of the wall alone

228 to collect one stone in an hour. Kelp
[381] (seaweed) burning for iodine on the beaches was almost extinct by 1894.[17]

SETTLEMENT AND POPULATION

Of the 96 houses counted as inhabited,
361 53 are in five hamlets and another six in a loose cluster near the harbor. There is no village as the term is commonly understood, though the main center is beside the harbor, where the inn occupies the one-time "big house" of the Allies family, with the church and the Post Office a short distance away. In all there are eight shops, none of which
[444] is recognizable from the outside, as everyone knows them: one is attached to the inn, another to the Post Office, a third occupies a specially built room in a farmyard, and the rest are in front rooms of houses. All the houses except about six have land attached.

Is this nucleated settlement as such?
361 On the first Ordnance Survey map
● 178 (1838) there were large clusters of houses and on the 1898 map the vast majority
621 of the houses were in clusters. The redistribution of land and building of new houses has broken up many hamlets or made new ones, for example in Knock townland (405 acres) where an old hamlet on a sandy site has been replaced by a new one on drier ground by the shore, with 15 of the townland's 17 houses. In Cloonamore (663 acres)
361 eight houses are placed along the shore
621 and eleven others scattered over the hillside; in Middlequarter (608 acres) there are eleven houses in the main hamlet, six beside the harbor and eleven others at various points beside the shore or on side roads; in Fawnmore (199 acres) six houses out of sixteen are in a loosely defined hamlet; and in West-
361 quarter (523 acres) nine houses out of

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[17] *Ibid.*, p. 349.

PREFACE

121 However interesting we may find 'bygones' for their own sake—and most of us take a natural interest in the way our forefathers lived—there is need to know not only how these relics were made and used but also what beliefs were held about them. Wherever possible I have studied the techniques of making and using tools as well as their lore, and by assisting in the processes have learnt more than books can teach. There is a clear relationship between the ways in which men's basic needs are satisfied and the social organization. Nothing less than the whole of the past is needed to explain the present, and in this difficult task we cannot afford to neglect the unrecorded past. The crafts of arable farming, of animal husbandry and the home industries have done more to shape our instincts and thoughts than the trampling of armies or the wranglings of kings which fill the documents from which history is written.

The outstanding interest of Ireland for the student of European origins lies in the fact that in its historic literature, language and social organization, as well as in its folklore and folk customs, it illustrates the marginal survival of archaic elements of the Indo-European world. Myles Dillon has shown how the three classes of ancient Irish society—the learned class, the warriors and the peasantry—are closely paralleled in the three main castes of Hinduism: Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaisya. The ethnographer may be led even farther afield in discovering a skin boat, a rush charm or a wheel-less cart that will take him on a scientific trail to the ends of the earth. And geologists and botanists find a similar interest in the peripheral survival in Ireland of rock-formations and floras which in their day dominated a wider scene.

● 178 121 The decades of demographic instability which culminated in the Great Famine of 1845–7 brought radical changes in the economy and landscape of rural Ireland. A correspondent in *The Times* of May 19th, 1853, noted that 'all accounts describe the country and its inhabitants as assuming more of the half-picturesque, half-comfortable aspect, of an English landscape', no doubt because hedges and an orderly husbandry had transformed the naked famine-stricken scene. The famine, as we shall see, was a great social watershed and it marked the end of an era that might well be termed prehistoric. But it is the

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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changes which are taking place today, a hundred years later, 178
that are finally extinguishing the prehistoric traditions. Mechanization and mass-production are invading the remotest 121
glens, and things which were the commonplaces of fifty years ago are becoming as remote to the young as the Middle Ages. Knowledge of ways of life that have altered little for centuries is passing away; skills whose loss the practical countryman may have cause to regret are disappearing. The Irish Universities have a unique opportunity of fostering local studies and folklore-research, but only University College, Dublin, has seriously supported this work. The Government of Northern Ireland, however, is to be congratulated on having offered to help to finance an Ulster Folk Museum on the lines of St. Fagans in Wales and those of the Scandinavian countries.

Meanwhile the National Museum in Dublin, the Belfast 127
Municipal Museum and the County Museum, Armagh, have been busy collecting and displaying the portable elements of material culture, and I have drawn freely on their exhibits for sketches of objects which it is now too late to find in everyday use. I wish to thank Mr. A. T. Lucas and Dr. J. Raftery, of the 000
National Museum, Mr. W. A. Seaby of the Belfast Museum, and Mr. T. G. F. Paterson of Armagh for their assistance and encouragement. Among many other friends and colleagues whose help I cannot forget are Kevin Danaher and Sean O'Sullivan of the Irish Folklore Commission, Professor Michael Duignan, Professor M. J. O'Kelly, Professor Sean O'Riordain, H. G. Tempest, and Dr. A. E. J. Went; and among my former students R. H. Buchanan, Rosemary Harris, N. C. Mitchel, Dr. D. McCourt, Dr. J. M. Mogey, V. B. Proudfoot and G. B. Thompson. I have to thank the editors of the *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* and of *Ulster Folklife* and Mr. W. A. Seaby for the loan of blocks, and Mr. Seaby also for permission to use several photographs from the collection of the late R. J. Welch. Mr. W. A. Green, Miss H. E. Henry, Mr. Frank Scovell and Mr. C. E. F. Trench have kindly supplied me with photographs. Miss Eileen Duncan has prepared the four maps, and other acknowledgements appear under the text-figures. It is a pleasure also to acknowledge the help received, either orally or in correspondence, from numerous Irishmen in all

I

IRELAND THE OUTPOST

THE charm of Ireland, north as well as south, lies as much 178
in the colourful speech and old-fashioned ways of her people
as in the beauty of her green fields and blue hills, the silver- 121
glint of lake waters and the gold of the scented whins. The observant visitor cannot fail to be attracted by customs and turns of speech, by traditions and tools which are obsolescent if not archaic in England. He will occasionally see in use in field and farmyard implements which went out of fashion so long ago in most parts of Great Britain that one may truly speak of them as medieval. Thus the toothed sickle, the flail, the one-eared spade, the clod-breaking mallet and seed-rake, the upright churn and the three-legged pot can all be closely matched in illustrations of English medieval rural life (Fig. 1). The boon-work which was an obligation owed by tenants to English landlords in the Middle Ages survives in the flax-pulling boons of Ulster, and the Anglo-Norman word for the lord's part of an estate, the demesne, is universally applied to the parklands of Ireland. The Irish baronies or kingdoms, as they are sometimes called, are similarly relics of the Middle Ages. The prevalence
of the Roman Catholic religion, to which 76 per cent of the [771]
population of Ireland adheres—the figure is 94 per cent for the Republic of Ireland—reinforces this sense of the past; and the English dialects spoken in many districts, even if shot through with Gaelic-derived turns of phrase, are strikingly Elizabethan. A strong medieval flavour attaches to the feast-day gatherings and patterns, to strawboys, wrenboys and the Christmas mummers. Medieval too is the diversity of folk-customs and of locally-made tools, which will be found to vary from one

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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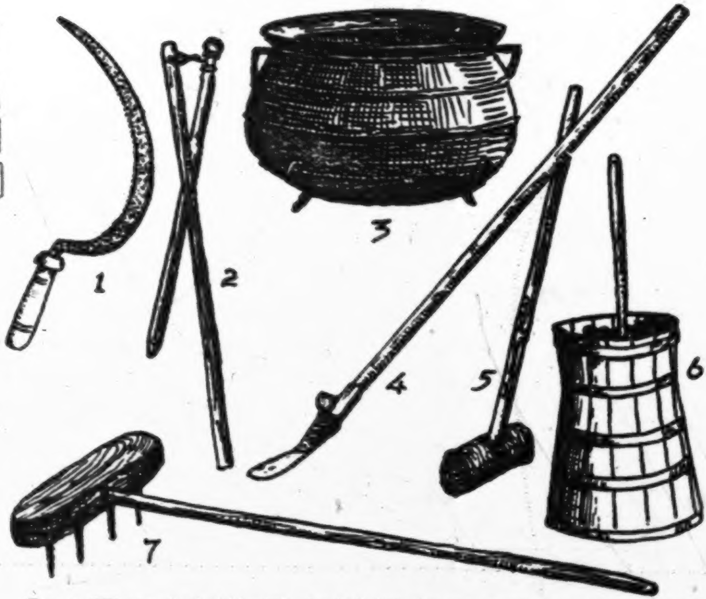

Fig. 1. 'The toothed sickle (1), the flail (2), the one-eared spade (4), the clod-breaking mallet (5), and seek-rake (7), the upright churn (6), and the three-legged pot (3), can all be closely matched in illustrations of English medieval rural life.'

district to another. The interest of these relics is enhanced when one discovers parallels among simple societies in distant parts of the world.

These ancient diversities are being ironed out at an increasing rate, and the opportunity of seeing and, what is more important, placing on record these age-old crafts and rites will soon pass. The wonder is that so many have persisted through the political, economic and social upheavals of the last 150 years. During that period the steady decline of the Gaelic language resulted in the loss of a great deal of information on local and regional life and of a vast store of oral literature, in which the lore of an ancient civilization was enshrined. The scientist must regard this loss as a tragedy comparable to that suffered by the historian in the disastrous burning of the Dublin Four Courts in

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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IRELAND THE OUTPOST

1922. Ireland is one of the last homes of the oral traditions of 121 prehistoric and medieval Europe, which mirror the routine of 178 rural life through the seasons, the contacts of peoples in war and in commerce, and the heroic deeds of half-legendary leaders. Luckily all is not lost: the devoted labours of the Irish Folklore Commission have rescued from the Gaeltacht and catalogued with scientific skill countless stories of the kind which enriched the literature of the medieval world. In Northern Ireland also belated efforts are being made to gather the harvest of lore and legend.

The study of both the material and spiritual folk-life of Ireland 114 and the oceanic fringes of Europe can throw light on the past and on the evolution of society in Britain and western Europe generally. English anthropologists and ethnographers have searched the farthest continents and enriched scientific literature with their findings, but they have neglected the little island across the Irish Sea. Irish scholars too, perhaps because they find it hard to detach themselves from what is familiar, have shown little interest until recently in the treasure-house of fact and fancy that lies about them. Some writers, indeed, appear to deplore the existence of the folk-customs I am describing in this book: they would conceal or even deny them. It has been learnedly argued, for instance, that the well-authenticated practice of 'ploughing by the tail'[1] was the lying invention of English propagandists, who passed an Act of Parliament prohibiting it, in 1635, merely to demonstrate how degraded the Irish must be! Those features of rural life which cannot be concealed or denied are regarded as due to the repressive hand of England, to penal laws, absenteeism and the poverty imposed by rack-rents and unscrupulous land-agents. Certainly there have been great abuses, and they have left the Irish suspicious and sensitive. It is unfortunate, therefore, that authoritative works recently published in England have needlessly exaggerated the tribal habits and pastoral nomadism of the ancient Irish. A writer in the *Cambridge Economic History*,[2] indeed, goes so far as to describe fifteenth-century Ireland as 'in great part, a

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[1] *The Irish Book-lover* (May, 1943), 9.

[2] *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*. Eds. J. H. Clapham and E. Power, 1 (1941), 161.

175 way of life was fostered by the ease with which the humbler
311 members of the community could compete with others in arts
demanding not wealth but personal qualities, in poetry, oratory,
361 song and physical prowess. Down to our own day the small size of the average farm has encouraged the survival of simple tools and limited the acquisition of machines. Subdivision of farms and the depressing effects of short leases and absenteeism were contributory factors. Subdivision of holdings was prohibited under an Act of 1881, but like so many other prohibited practices it did not cease.

The retention of many of the attributes of a peasant society
175 is the key to the survival of the folk ways with which we are
602 concerned in the following chapters. Even the Great Famine
● 178 which marks a grim watershed in social and economic history
did not entirely obliterate them, though it had such far-reaching effects that it might be regarded as the end of prehistoric times in Ireland. First in importance is the strength of blood-ties in extended family groups, still maintained even in many urban communities. During the air raids on Belfast, for example, the problem of finding billets for evacuated homeless was complicated by the refusal of large groups of related families to be separated from each other. In remote rural areas the blood-tie is a dominant force, governing economic as well as social relationships,[1] its loyalties overriding the impartial administration of justice. A relative is a 'friend', even if 'far-out'—that is, remotely connected—and friendship is a matter of blood relationship. A peasant community is concerned first and foremost with the maintenance and continuity of society: it does not judge—and cannot be judged—purely by economic standards. Immemorially peasant families have been large, and child-bearing is widely regarded as part of the ritual necessary to bring success with the stock and the crops. In rural Ireland
[842] barrenness in a wife still tends to be regarded as an unnatural
and disgraceful thing, and many superstitious cures for 'the
178 sterile curse' are recorded. This is but one example of a wide-
spread attitude towards life, to which comparative anthropology
789 offers many parallels. Sympathetic magic, or the performance

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[1] C. M. Arensberg and S. T. Kimball, ***Family and Community in Ireland*** (1940), Ch. 13.

of certain acts in the hope of inducing success in similar fields 178 of action, provides an explanation of many of the folk-practices [789] with which we are concerned.

Pushed too far, however, the observance of such antiquated practices in the end defeated its purpose and threatened the extinction of traditional life. A clue to much of the paradox in Irish culture is to be found in the reaction which follows an adherence to custom carried beyond the breaking-point. Spade-labour for example has reluctantly given way to the plough, but once the plough is generally accepted the spade becomes a despised implement so that a vegetable garden is a rare thing, at best a tiny plot left to the care of the women. In another [177] field, the substitution of the vilest American films for the traditional ceilidhe gathering is a sad change. The crisis of the [546] Great Famine was a major turning-point, and there followed a general reaction against everything associated with it. This was particularly true of the Irish peasants who sought refuge across the Atlantic: the American immigrants, driven from the land by extreme poverty, were determined to have nothing more to do with it and became almost invariably town-dwellers. The donkey and the goat, symbols of poverty, are neglected and despised in many parts of Ireland. A Donegal crofter once told me he dare not keep a donkey for fear of being unable to marry off his daughters: instead he kept a horse, though he could ill afford one, for its prestige value. The dangerously 178 monotonous diet of Irish countryfolk, also, can be explained in the light of the famine. So bitter is the folk-memory of these 262 times that useful wild sources of food are now neglected and despised; for example, wild berries of all kinds, the ubiquitous eel, hare and rabbit; the cresses and the edible seaweeds and fungi. It should be added, however, that some of these foods were apparently tabu—the rabbit, an Anglo-Norman invader, was rarely eaten—and that the potato had played its part in debasing diet in the period before the famine.[1]

Perhaps the most striking example of reaction is to be found 178 in the expressed desire of most country people to have an isolated dwelling-house. The clachan or hamlet, once the centre of 361 communal life and tradition, is despised, a symbol of squabbling

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[1] R. N. Salaman, *The History and Social Influence of the Potato* (1949), Ch.15.

178 [361] poverty, and it is the wish of nearly everyone to have a house where he cannot be overlooked. What is surprising in the light of these physical changes is the extent to which old customs and habits of mind survive to this day. As the late R. A. S. Macalister wrote in his last book, perhaps not entirely without malice: 'The importance of Ireland is that, thanks to the 'time-lag', it has rendered to Anthropology the unique, inestimable, indispensable service of carrying a primitive European *Precivilization* down into late historic times, and there holding it up for our observation and instruction.'[1]

178 133 Finally we should notice how the physical diversity of the country conspired with its remoteness to permit the survival through the centuries of indigenous peoples and customs. 'Mountainy men', in the picturesque Irish phrase, keep their foothold in every corner of the land, for mountain refuges lie all around the coast. Even the broad central lowland is diversified by several isolated ranges, still more by extensive bogs where movement has always been difficult. Before forest clearance and drainage were effected, woods, lakes and bogs were widespread, and the English made every effort to destroy the forest remnants because they sheltered the native 'woodkernes'. So it had been in Norman England; where the land became difficult, through mountain or forest, or where water filled large spaces, the pikesman or bowman could hold his own against the man on horseback, and a democratic flavour was in the air.

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[1] R. A. S. Macalister, *The Archaeology of Ireland* (1949), x.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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174 from it. The Gaelic conquest of the Irish Midlands was not completed until the sixth century A.D., and down to the Anglo-Norman invasions the distinction between free and tributary tribes remained.[1] The counties bordering the middle Shannon—Leitrim, Roscommon, Longford and the western parts of Westmeath and Offaly—are probably as full of survivals as any in Ireland. This is the land of the loy and the steeveen (Chapter X) and the last home of many an ancient custom. The lowland
[133] of which it is the centre is floored with limestone levelled off at about 200 ft. but diversified by occasional low hills, by intricate solution lakes and by glacial eskers and drifts among which lie countless small lakes and bogs (Fig. 3). It is hard to realize
[489] the isolation from which this area suffered before the introduction of improved wheeled vehicles and the coming of the canal and the railway.[2]

311 Let us now look at the cultural landscape which the hand of man has fitted to the physical frame of the island. Although man has been in this country for only a fraction of the time he has occupied South England and the continent, his mark is everywhere. Wander where you will through the length and breadth of the island, and through the dozens of lesser isles around its shores, and you will never fail to see traces of human activity, past or present, even in the most empty and inaccessible spots. Apart from the more or less datable remains of church and rath, castle and cairn, the land is covered with the marks of man's toil. The history of rural Ireland could be read out of doors, had we the skill, from the scrawlings made by men in the field boundaries of successive periods. In them the unlettered countryman wrote his runes on the land. The student of historical geography has been greatly assisted in the task of interpreting this palimpsest by the new tool of air-photography which, given suitable conditions, will pick out all man-made marks on the face of the earth.

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● 178 The sturdy field walls and hedged banks which give the countryside its intimate character are by no means as immutable

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[1] T. F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (1946), 204.

[2] Improvements in public transport were initiated by the Italian, Bianconi, who, profiting from the cavalry horses thrown on the market after the Napoleonic wars, began his famous fleet of 'cars' in Tipperary in 1815.

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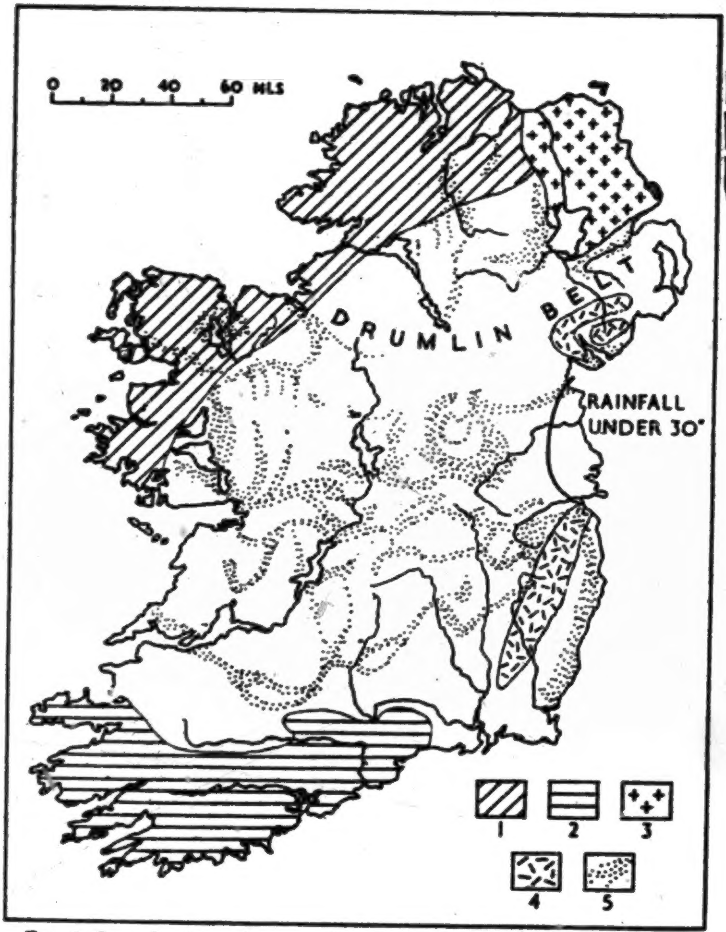

FIG. 3. Some landscape features. (1) Caledonian Highlands, (2) Armorican ridge and valley, (3) North-eastern basalts, (4) Eastern granites, (5) Glacial sands and gravels (eskers) (after J. K. Charlesworth). Drumlins are little hills composed of glacial drift. See Pl. 5, 1.

as they appear. The pattern they make has changed with the centuries in response to new needs and new tools. At present we are in a period of fairly rapid change, for the tractor calls for larger and more regular fields than those made by the spade

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● 178 311 and the horse-plough, and old hedges are being grubbed up to give the machine elbow-room. This in turn leads to a demand for larger farms, for the small holdings which are characteristic of Ireland (one half of the farms are between fifteen and fifty acres) have customarily just so many fields as will give a proper balance between pasture and plough, and where two or three tiny fields are knocked into one the balance is upset. In the same way earlier technological advances, though on a smaller scale, have changed the cultural landscape at different periods. Demographic crises have had similar effects. Before the Great Famine, for example, 80 per cent of all Irish farms were under fifteen acres.

From the earliest times, it seems, Ireland was a land of small holdings and small field-plots. Yet the actual pattern of small hedged fields as we know it today is of no great antiquity. For the most part it is a consequence of the agrarian revolution which affected the country, at various dates in different parts, between about 1750 and 1850. It was the planting of thorn hedgerows and the building of stone walls that fixed what had previously been ill-defined and temporary field boundaries, associated with the openfield or rundale system of land use. With permanent enclosure went the consolidation of holdings into compact independent blocks, though in some districts independence was achieved without grouping the fields together so that properties consist of scattered hedged fields which reflect the disposition of plots under the earlier openfield system. The hedge in fact has had a hard struggle for survival in the poorer districts. Both the thorns and the gates which enclosure brought with it were frequently hacked down for
[417] firewood, and to this day a wooden gate is a rarity in the countryside: the field gates are almost invariably of iron. There are many districts where the thorn hedge itself is almost unknown, where low earthen mounds half overgrown with bramble and whin (gorse) give us a glimpse of a stage between permanent enclosures and the openfields which they replaced. In Donegal gangs of villagers threw down the landlords' fences as quickly as they were erected,[1] and in some parts of the county they are still kept in repair for the summer months only.

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[1] Lord George Hill, *Gweedore*, 41.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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IV

THE THATCHED HOUSE

VISITORS to Ireland have not failed to comment on the 342 wide gap which separates the splendid if often dilapidated mansions of the landed gentry from the humble dwellings of the mass of the rural population. This is a characteristic dichotomy which runs through Irish life and goes deep into the Irish past: it was foreshadowed in the distinction between the Gaelic overlords and the tributary tribes who were still in an inferior position at the time of the Anglo-Norman conquest. By English standards the Irish farmer is a small-holder. Substantial farmhouses with some pretensions to architectural dignity are in general restricted to the planted areas and they are few in number compared with the traditional single-storied thatched cabins of the peasantry. These have so frequently been condemned as artless and insanitary that it might be supposed nothing could be said in their favour. Their disadvantages indeed are obvious, and they have given way in many [178] districts to slated houses of cement-blocks or bricks and are doomed to vanish entirely under a wave of thin-walled boxes with garish red roofs. But it is not only sentimentalists who deplore their disappearance. With their passing, writes Robin Flower, something of the old world passes away, 'for the older type of house was in a right harmony with its surroundings, while these high and bare constructions stand in a perpetual contradiction of the whole environment of hill and sea and sky in which they are so violently set down.'[1]

In fact a good deal more could be said in favour of the old styles, at their best providing homes of character, comfort and

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[1] Robin Flower, *The Western Isle* (1944), 46.

POTS AND PANS

Despite certain conservative elements it must be recognized 262 that very great changes have taken place in the Irishman's diet 178 in recent centuries. Tea and the potato, invaders from east and west, have largely replaced whitemeats, although another more recent pair of intruders, maize-meal and rice, distributed by the British government during the famine, have made no such conquest. Dr. Salaman has fully discussed the depressing effects of the potato on diet and culture.[1] Unless one has seen a peasant family sitting down to a meal of boiled potatoes it is hardly possible to credit the consumption figures. It used to be reckoned that a stone a day was the allowance for a labourer, and it was 'by no means uncommon, in times of plenty, for a labourer to eat 14 lb. of potatoes at a meal'.[2] An average consumption of 8 lb. per day for each member of a family is well authenticated. It is not surprising that there was a general craving for 'kitchen', tasty relishes such as strong butter when this bulky, starchy and monotonous food came to dominate the Irish diet. There seems to have been an expansion of sea fishing to keep pace with the demand for 'kitchen'. Down to recent times salt fish were hawked through the autumn countryside [438] by noisy 'cadgers', and the careful housewife would have a barrel or two of salt herrings put by for the winter. One is reminded of the 'relishes' with which many African peoples relieve the monotony of a diet of mealies.

One of the many Irish customs which the English found 262 revolting was the bleeding of cattle. Fynes Moryson wrote: 231 'they often let their cows' blood, eating the congealed blood with butter'.[3] Arthur Young notes that in Wicklow 'they bleed their horses and cows, and mix the blood with meal for food'.[4] In Ulster cattle were bled 'in a smooth place, the coagulating blood being strewn with salt until a little mound was formed. This was cut up into squares and 'laid by for use as food in the scarce time of the year'.[5] Unfortunately few details of the bleeding operation have come down to us though I have been told that it was customary to close the wound with a cloven stick.

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[1] R. N. Salaman, *The History and Social Influence of the Potato* (1949), chs. 11–18.

[2] I. Weld, *Roscommon* (1832), 429.

[3] Fynes Moryson, *The Manners and Customs of Ireland*, 321.

[4] A. Young, *Tour*, 2, 62.

[5] C. Otway, *Sketches in Erris and Tyrawly* (1841), 333.

bend or 'lift' of the blade and to the lateral bend or 'dish'. The 412
lift may be well distributed or it may be concentrated at one 184
point: it may be curved or cranked.

The shape of the blade being thus precisely standardized for each area, various sizes are made to suit individual users and also the seasons of the year. Thus four or five spades of different sizes, ranging say from 13 to 17 in. in length, will be seen on sale in the market towns. In addition some longer spades may be offered for old-fashioned folk, for the blade of the spade is now made shorter than it used to be. These shorter spades, [178] required for digging potatoes, retain the often awkward shape of the long spring spade—designed for ridge-making—which is going out of favour with drill cultivation.

The Irish spade differs from the English not only in its narrow bent blade but also in its thickened sides, its foot-plates, its straight handle and the short straight straps or tails to which the handle is attached. Whereas the English spade derives its digging power from the curvature above the blade, in the Irish spade the curvature is all in the blade. Moreover the Irish prefer a long shaft (4 ft.) without hand-grip, though in Ulster the shaft is short (3 ft.) and headed, i.e. fitted with a cross-piece at the end. The headed shaft, however, is replacing the long headless shaft which is better adapted to the process of sod turning than to digging. With the headed shaft the control of the spade is mainly in the hand that grips the head, which thus tends to be the right hand: consequently this type of spade goes with left-footed digging (Fig. 41).

These differences are largely explained by differences of 244
function, for the primary purpose of the Irish two-eared spade, like the loy which it has replaced, is to turn the sod. It is a 412
hand plough rather than a digging tool, and it owes its remarkable development to the expansion of potato cultivation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To the new crop, as we shall see, the old method of burying the seed in prepared beds was quickly adapted, for ridge cultivation was ideally suited to a root-planting culture, and in fact potatoes are grown in ridges on the Andean plateaux. Thus the adoption of the potato helped to perpetuate tools and methods of cultivation which might otherwise have died out. Nowadays, however,

412
[244] drill-cultivation has replaced lazy-beds over most of the country.

Some ridge-making tools have almost entirely disappeared,
412 for example the mattock and the breast-plough, which were once
characteristic respectively of the south-west and the north-east
● [178] of the country and which may still be seen occasionally in Cos.
Kerry and Antrim. The mattock ('graffan') is a tool of ancient
[171] lineage which finds its parallels in Wales, in Spain and Mediterranean lands, and throughout the tropics (Fig. 43). In Kerry and west Cork it has had many uses—for breaking sods and clods on the ridges, for loosening the earth of the furrows before shovelling, and also for cutting sods for ridge-making, for 'paring and burning' and for roof-covering. Arthur Young describes the process of graffaning a field by rolling the sod with the foot as it was cut: it was reckoned very heavy work.[1] The breast-plough or flachter (Fig. 45) served the same purpose in Cos. Antrim and Londonderry and earned the same reputation. This instrument is now largely restricted to paring bogland in preparation for turf-cutting. During the second world war I broke in a neglected mountain garden by making lazy-beds with a flachter and I heartily agree with the verdict of an Antrim labourer: 'half a day with it was enough for any ordinary

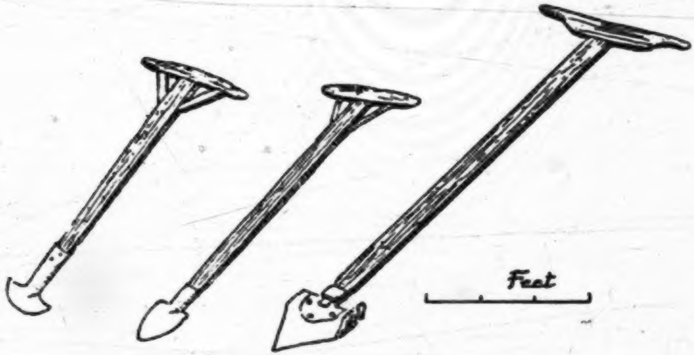

FIG. 45. Flachters or breast-ploughs, north-east Ireland. (1) North Antrim. (2) Co. Tyrone. (3) Mid-Antrim.

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[1] A. Young, *Tour*, 2, 10.

HARVEST

When the scythe was transferred from the mowing of hay 243 to the cutting of corn during the second half of last century 412 there was much opposition from the reapers, sometimes for the good reason that little fields full of great boulders or the stumps 178 of bog-fir gave no space to swing a scythe, and a single blow on the fast-moving point may ruin the blade. But one suspects that conservatism was rooted in magic. It is said that the rice-growers of Malaya refuse to use a scythe because its slashing motion would frighten away the spirits of the rice. Some such notion may have strengthened the Irishman's condemnation of the scythe. And I find another curious parallel with the Far East. The Malayan reaper hums like an insect while he is cutting the rice, perhaps to soothe the spirits of the living crop. In Ireland there is an old belief that an insect kept in a little box fastened to the handle of hook or scythe will bring luck and give the blade greater cutting power. Both scythe and sickle are personal possessions and their luck is personal: they are loaned with [422] reluctance. When a sickle is borrowed it should not be passed [426] directly from hand to hand but thrown on the ground and then picked up. This belief, which applies to all pointed objects, may be explained by the danger of handling a sharp tool, for bad luck is often related to bad practice.

But before coming to corn harvest the handling of flax should 248 be described. Unpleasant handling it is, even if not quite so onerous (and odorous) as working with hemp or jute. When grown for fibre flax is harvested after the pale blue flowers have fallen but before the seed ripens, and because it is the stalk that is being harvested it is not cut but pulled up by the roots. 'Lint' is a crop of the small family farm, for many hands are required, teams or 'boons' of anything from half a dozen to [476] thirty people gathering from neighbouring farms and working together in a festival spirit which reaches its climax in the evening dance. The tough flax is hard on the hands and the stooping is back-breaking. But the beets (sheaves) are carefully put together, for they have to be spread after retting and the stalks should lie evenly. The three handfuls which compose the beet are laid down at slightly different angles so that they will separate easily. A standard beet is reckoned to be 22 inches in diameter. The bands (ties) are prepared beforehand and consist [284]

463 survivors of these wandering folk are the tinkers, sworn enemies
326 of the farmers but useful in many ways to the farmers' wives.
Though miscalled gypsies they are of native Irish stock and
have little, if any, Romany blood. Numbering between 5,000 and
6,000 but declining, they now find little scope for their traditional skill as white smiths but subsist mainly on collecting
scrap metal and dealing in horses. Down to recent times their
[273] services were in demand for making and repairing the stills
in which home-made whiskey (poteen) was manufactured.
[554] Weavers and tailors as well as tinkers were despised by farming
folk as 'travellers', whereas the smith was held in high esteem.

Most of the home industries depended on wood and other
463 plant products, natural or cultivated, and on the skin and hair of
● 178 animals. Nearly all these crafts are now dead or dying and their
products, perishable by nature, are either gone or fast disappearing. A few skills live on, others survive in children's pastimes or in the memories of old people. The unwritten lore of
[824] the countryside included a vast store of information on all the
[825] varied trees, plants and animals, birds and fishes which in times
past played their part in the lives of the people. Nearly every
[861] species had its practical, medicinal or magical uses, and through
careful observation, empirical knowledge and a wealth of
poetic fancy, a vivid interest in the world of nature was maintained and passed on from one generation to another. Much
of this lore has been lost with the decline of the Gaelic tongue
and the spread of formal education and book-learning. The
[871] country school must conform to a clerk-breeding curriculum
designed to meet urban demands. The destruction of woodland
and the debasement of standards of living which followed the
adoption of the alien potato and the consequent famines had
serious consequences on home crafts. Then mass-produced
goods came to drive out many products which depended on a
discriminating knowledge of local materials. Thus barbed wire
has taken the place of its rustic prototype—a hay-rope strung
with thorns—and binder-twine has killed a dozen varieties of
home-made ropes and thongs. The economist might think of
them as bonds tethering rural communities to the soil, but to
the sociologist they imply spiritual as well as physical links
with mother earth.

XX

WEDDINGS AND WAKES

582 THE average age of marriage among Irish countrywomen,
about 28, is said to be higher than in any other country
●178 in the world: that of the men is higher still, and in addition there
731 are many who never marry. These are among the demographic
776 consequences of the economic and social changes which followed
the Great Famine of 1845–47, for down to that time the mass of the population had nothing to lose and everything to gain by marrying young. Among the economic factors which led to the postponement of marriage may be mentioned the rising standards of living, the prohibition of the subdivision of holdings so that only one son could inherit, and the need for larger farms consequent on the decline of subsistence farming and the increase of pastoral husbandry, which meant that the peasant had to look and plan ahead. Equally important, I believe, was the effect of the crisis of the famine in breaking down patterns of behaviour which had continued with little change since prehistoric times. The elder faiths were rudely shattered so that today we have only the broken remnants left, stray survivals which have lost their meaning in a modern setting. The scattering of the fairy hosts is the constant lament of old people for whose parents they were a reality. Over large parts of the country, down to famine times the fairies (among them the ancestral spirits), and the powers of nature in sun and stone, tree, flower and welling water were ruling forces whose malice must somehow be averted, and whose beneficence must be
courted by magical acts. Nature's reproductive surplus on which
[842] human life depended could best be assured by breeding children
to capacity.

XXI

OLD PISHROGUES

AMONG the serious nineteenth-century students of Irish folklife 114
a Dublin surgeon, who is perhaps better known as the
father of Oscar Wilde, deserves special mention. Sir William 731
Wilde was not only a frequent contributor to the learned journals 178 ●
but he found time to compile a pioneer catalogue of the Irish antiquities
now housed in the National Museum of Ireland. His very active life spanned the Great Famine, and the monumental report on the *Tables of Death* which appeared as Vol. I of Part 5 of the Census of 1851 was largely his work. In it he dwells on the shattering effects of those tragic years, 1845–47, on the immemorial customs and natural poetry of the Irish peasants: 'The closest ties of kinship were dissolved; the most ancient and long-cherished usages of the people were disregarded; the once proverbial gaiety and lightheartedness of the peasant people seemed to have vanished completely, and village merriment or marriage festival was no longer heard or seen throughout the regions desolated by the intensity and extent of the famine.'[1] Another observer noted that the traditions of hospitality (574)
were weakened greatly and that padlocks made their
first appearance at this time.[2]

Wilde observed that the coming of the railway at about the 805
same period was a contributory factor in the change because it 178
worked to a time-table—more or less—and involved an artificial 496
division of the day instead of an observance of the signs of
nature changing with the seasons. Time was related to social activity and had different values at various seasons of the year.

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[1] *Census of Ireland* (1851), I, Part 5 (1956), 242.

[2] A. M. Sullivan, *The New Ireland* (1877), 65.

OLD PISHROGUES

805 The whistle of the 7.15 now replaced cock-crow. But if it were
● 178 indeed true that peasant values had perished entirely and that
the rural population was transformed into the moronic cattle-herders
[496] of Filson Young's *Ireland at the Cross-Roads*, then this
book could not have been written. Luckily a mountain farmer
will still relate time to nature and refer to a moment of summer
twilight, in a memorable phrase quoted by Dr. James Delargy,
as 'the time when the dew was thinking of falling'. The wonder
178 is that so much lore and so many relics of pre-famine days have
survived. Yet the term 'old pishrogues' which is applied to all
771 varieties of witchcraft and fairy lore—even if sometimes used
in awe rather than contempt—shows that these things are
now regarded objectively and are no longer an accepted part
of social life. Superstitious practices tend to be carried out in
secret and to be resorted to only when more rational methods
have been tried and found wanting. Many of the old customs,
however, have had their life prolonged by children's games,
the seasonal bonfires and May Queens becoming their amusements.

Most of the pishrogues relate to fairies and to trees, wells
823 and stones; and that these elder faiths have their roots in a very
171 remote pre-agricultural phase of human evolution is attested by
their very general observance among primitive people. As an
example we may take the South African Bushmen, one of the
lowliest branches of the human family. In a recent report from
G. P. van der Post's expedition to the Kalahari we read that in
the heart of the Bushman country there are sacred hills which
are regarded as the home of very ancient spirits. Van der Post
was told that 'right on the top of the central hill there was a
spring of water and beside it a tree which bore the fruit of
knowledge, and close by the tree a rock with deep marks where
the greatest spirit of all had knelt to pray'.[1] The sacred hilltops, the ancestral spirits, the well of water, the 'gentle' tree
and the cup-marked stone are familiar themes in Irish folk
tradition. Throughout western Europe, from the fifth century
Council of Arles onwards, churchmen denounced those 'who
offer vows to trees, or wells, or stones'. The great religions
have had to come to terms with such cults, in Monsoon Asia as

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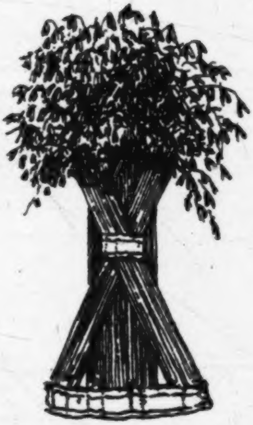
[1] *The Times* (14th December, 1955).

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

512 besom's association with everyday tasks and with the fireside
352 endows it with special power. Thrown after a departing match-
[777] maker or anyone going on an important errand, it brings luck
to his mission.

For most people, needless to say, such things are now mean-
771 ingless superstitions—old pishrogues. True, one still hears
789 occasionally of cows being blinked, of a black cock buried alive
as a cure for epilepsy, of a healthy woman pining away because
● 178 a neighbour was sticking pins into a waxen image. These are
stray survivals, doomed to disappear; but in a larger sense the
past never wholly dies: it lives on buried in the minds of men
and in the landscapes they have fashioned.



14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date)1910-12
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

XIV. *Calendar Customs.*

796 178 ● Most of these customs are so widely spread as to require only brief notice, and were noted, before 1816, by the Rev. James Grahame, the curate of Kilrush. They comprise the eating of pancakes on Shrove Tuesday and of eggs at Easter; playing tricks and "fooling" on April 1st; setting May bushes before houses on Old May Day; lighting bonfires on Midsummer Eve, dancing round them, and driving cattle through them; beginning hunting on Michaelmas Day; Hallowe'en practices on October 31st; midnight processions, with music, on certain nights in the week before Christmas, (which had just been discontinued in 1816); and mummers, wren boys, and bull-baiting on St. Stephen's Day.[5] The May bush died out, I believe, during the dark years of the Great Famine; I never heard of any limit, other than the clearance of the crops, for beginning hunting; but, except the bull-baiting and the waits, all the rest still exist.

It is well to have to record the dying out of the custom of [825] killing the wren on St. Stephen's Day, even if it springs from laziness rather than from humanity. "Who cares for the birds but God!" was once retorted when I "put in a word for" the wren. There is probably a very old prejudice against it, for the "droleen" stood confessed as a "little druid" among birds, and the "druid" of Irish tradition was not the majestic white-robed priest of the oak grove, but a sorcerer who injured meanly by spells, a foe of God and of His servants, but a contemptible and impotent one. This feeling was expressed in the contemptuous [889] term *shandruee* ("old druid") for a worthless old man, in use in my boyhood. How far the wren rites have orthodox ritual or etiquette is doubtful. Formerly the youth of a whole district combined as wren boys, but now they go in bands of from two to six,[6] and the wren bush is often a mere branch with a few rags and no wren. A structure of evergreens, in general design like a *crux ansata*, covered with streamers and with the dead bird hung

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[5] Mason's *Parochial Survey* (1816), vol. ii.

[6] See Plate IX., from a photograph taken on December 26th, 1910, by Mrs. O'Callaghan Westropp of Coolreagh.

[p. 227]

14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date)1910-12
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

796

up or in a sort of cage,[7] was till lately carried around. There is still sometimes to be found tolerable dancing and singing, as a break in the weary succession of small begging parties, shuffling and playing stupid buffoonery. The verses usually begin:— 178

> "The wran, the wran, the king of all birds,
> On Stephen's Day was caught in the furze." 178

but the next lines are greatly varied:— 539

> "Although he is little, his family is great, 796
> And (*or* So) I pray you all ladies (*or* good Christians) to give him a treat."

I noted the following haunting lines on Stephen's Day in 1909:—

> "Put your hand in your pocket and take out your purse
> And give us some money to bury the wran."

Equally melodious were lines in vogue some thirty years ago:—

> "We broke his bones with sticks and stones,
> And give us some money to get us a drink."

There was another form, evidently from an "artificial" source, heard by my elder brothers about Carnelly, perhaps sixty years ago or more:—

> "Landlady, Landlady, give us some cheer,
> Landlady, Landlady, give us some beer.
> If you give us of the best,
> We'll pray your soul in Heaven may rest.
> If you give us of the worse,
> We'll pray it will (*or* may) be quite the reverse."

It was generally believed that St. Stephen had hid in a cave, and that his retreat had been betrayed to his enemies by the wren. Mummers are now reappearing, after a long lapse of time, among the wren boys. 796 178

Another practice which my predecessors often saw before the Famine was the carrying of a sort of scarecrow figure, to represent St. Brigit, by women in August about the Clare Castle district. St. Brigit's rites in some places take place on Lady Day (August 15th).

Killing an animal, or a goose, at Martinmas and a goose at Michaelmas are of recent occurrence. On St. John's Eve I have, as a child, leaped over or passed between fires, and been told of cattle being forced to do the same. About 1895 very few bonfires were lighted, and the custom appeared likely to expire, but of late the

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[7] A somewhat similar wren's cage has been procured for the National Museum, Dublin.

[P. 228]

14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date)1910-12
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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178 fires have been more numerous. Formerly bones were saved up
796 to crackle as they burnt in the fires, and even when this ceased
the pronunciation "bone-fire" continued. Magical rites connected
[789] with milk and butter were, very recently, performed
secretly at wells on May Eve (April 30th) as described later.

Other annual observances were sports which first included, and
526 then lapsed into, mere races. The *iraghts*, or gatherings, at the
527 mound and inauguration place of Moy Eir (Magh Adhair) lasted
down to 1838, and were still very faintly remembered by old
175 people in 1890 as having died out in the Famine years, with so
much of the social brightness of the people. I may note that this
place,—the reputed seat of Adhar, a Firbolg prince, about the
beginning of our era,—became the place of inauguration of the
native princes of Thomond from before 877, and continued so
down, at least, to 1570. The name Magh Adhair (phonetically
Moy Eir) at first covered the whole central plain of east Clare, but
steadily shrank to that of a small tribal territory, and then, in
1584 and 1655, to the two townlands of Corbally and Toonagh
(Tuanagh-moyree). By 1838 it was attached only to two fields,—
"Moyross, or Moyree, parks,"—in the former, and is now confined
to a single field, "Moyars Park," and to the "rath" or mound
in Toonagh, across the brook. Notices of the inaugurations are
numerous from 1275 to 1311, and occur sporadically from 877
onwards. Other and less famous gatherings were at Creganenagh
("Fair or Assembly Crag")[1] on the bare hill over Termon in the
Burren, and at a field in Caherminaun near Kilfenora. The latter
probably gave the name Ballykinvarga, (Baile-cinn-mharghaidh in
1380), *i.e.* "head of the market," to the adjacent townland, and
may have been connected with the remarkable ring wall, girt with
a wide abattis of pillar stones, not far distant. Some forgotten
assembly is commemorated at Eanty ("Fairs" or "gatherings")
in the east of Burren. Other assemblages will be dealt with later
under XVI. *Patterns.*

XV. *Wells and Well Customs.*

823 Hesitation in questioning poor people too closely about their
religious feelings and rites has, I fear, rendered my notes on this

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[1] Aenach was not merely a fair, but an assembly for merrymaking, consultation, etc.

[P. 229]

14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date)1910-12
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

796 devotees, and merrymakers. A legend was then told how a wild young squire of the Brady family in attempting to carry off a lovely peasant girl from the pattern was overtaken by the vengeance of
796 St. Caimin. The boat was upset by a squall, and the squire and
688 his "understrapper" (a foster-brother) were drowned; the girl and boatman clung to the keel, and floated ashore unharmed. The local horror of the sacrilege was emphasized by the gruesome addition that, when "the young master" was waked in the "big house" and the foster-brother in the barn, all stole away to the better entertainment, and, when the barn was unlocked in the morning, the bare skeleton of the instigator of the outrage was found covered with rats and *keerogues* (black-beetles). The horrible "turf rick legend"[9] says that the Iniscaltra pattern lasted for three days.

796 Other less famous patterns were held on the sandhills near Lehinch in honour of St. MacCreehy. The celebration got shifted to "Garland Sunday" (*Domhnach cruim duibh*, the last in July), and to the honour of St. Brigit of Kildare. It was
[778] finally replaced by races, which at Kilnaboy and elsewhere may also represent degenerated patterns.

At St. Lachtin's well, near Miltown Malbay, a few poor old people may be seen, especially on Sundays and Thursdays, making "rounds." These are usually two sets of five each,—the first on the causeway round the well, and the second on a wider circle "sunwise." The devotees take off their shoes, stockings, and hats, (or, if women, their shawls and bonnets), and start for the well repeating the prescribed prayers. They climb to kiss a cross on the branch of one of the weird old weather-bent trees in the hollow, and, lastly, pour water from the well on their faces, hands, and feet.[10]

Patterns were held near the very early church of Termonchronain, near Castletown in the Burren, and, not many miles away, on the last day of summer "round~~s~~" are performed at the two altars of the oratory of St. Colman MacDuach at Kinallia.[11] Stations were held till late years at Kilmoon, and at Tobermogua,

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[9] Cf. vol. xxi., p. 348.

[10] *Limerick Field Club Journal*, vol. iii., p. 15.

[11] Cf. *ante*, p. 50, and Plate IV.

[P. 237]

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

Introduction

101 INIS BEAG is a fictitious name for one of the many inhabited islands of the Irish
131 Gaeltacht.[1] It is a rocky, barren protuberance in the ocean, buffeted constantly
105 by wind and storm, where 350 hardy people eke out a meager existence. This
178 tiny island is renowned not only for the distinctive folk culture possessed by its
[162] inhabitants, but for its numerous, well-preserved antiquities which attest to at least
5000 years of almost continuous human habitation, and its great beauty of land
and seascape. During the past 150 years, first scientists, then writers, and more
recently film, radio, and television producers have visited Inis Beag, and their many
works have served to familiarize the world with the culture, albeit romanticized,
[291] of the islanders. As a result of literary publicity, which commenced in the first
[241] decade of this century, increasing numbers of tourists have been drawn to Inis Beag
[501] over the years. The cultural forms which are most publicized and attract the most
attention from tourists are the traditional garb of the folk, their skill in rowing
[197] the famed canoe, called *curach*, the manner in which they manufacture soils and
grow in them a variety of crops, and their Gaelic speech.

114 My wife and I were introduced to Inis Beag during a short visit to Ireland
121 in 1955, when we viewed the island from the nearby coast and talked of its cultural
127 past and present with scholars in Dublin, Cork, and Galway. Between 1955
and 1958, we immersed ourselves in writings pertaining to Irish history and culture, and during the three summer months of the latter year we visited several peasant communities on the mainland and three islands, including Inis Beag, of the Gaeltacht. We made plans to come back to Inis Beag as soon as possible to undertake research, and in 1959 and 1960 we were able to spend the greater part of a year there, during which time we visited briefly on three occasions a neighboring island—Inis Thiar[2]—and several institutions on the mainland to conduct library and other research. We returned eight times to Inis Beag and Dublin for

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197 [1] The Gaeltacht—areas in which 25 to 100 percent of the inhabitants speak Irish—
162 embraces portions of 12 northern, western, and southern counties and a population of approximately 600,000 people (Freeman 1960:166).

103 [2] In Gaelic, Inis Thiar (also a fictitious name) means Western Isle, and Inis Beag is
192 translated Little Isle.

visits ranging in length from one to seven weeks between 1961 and 1966 to com- 114
plete our project. During the 19 months that we dwelled on the island, most of 121
our research was directed toward documenting the contemporary culture of Inis 127
Beag: its technological, economic, political, social, religious, esthetic, and recreational aspects. We also investigated informal and formal education and the personality traits created by it, reconstructed Inis Beag history of the past century by examining historical materials of many sorts and probing the memories of elderly respondents, and recorded cultural change in process.

The research techniques that we employed are standard ethnographic ones: 12
the guided and open-ended interview, external and participant observation, collection of life histories, photography and phonography. Two departures from methodological orthodoxy were our use, as projective devices, of literary works and
a sixty-two-verse ballad that I composed. A dozen islanders of both sexes and [539]
three age groups read at our request three books portraying Inis Beag culture, and
we recorded and analyzed their varied responses. My ballad, now embedded in the [177]
island folklore tradition, is based on a shipwreck and rescue off Inis Beag that we [178]
witnessed, and a series of incidents which ensued during the following months. Alterations made by local singers after it was completed and the reactions to it by the islanders gave us insights into Inis Beag culture and personality which would have been difficult to obtain under other circumstances of fieldwork. I must add that the ballad was a product of exuberant cultural involvement and the satisfactions of creative endeavor. Its research implications were unanticipated.

The Inis Beag islanders qualify as folk people in almost every respect, 105
according to anthropological definition (Lewis 1960:1): the population has main- [121]
tained its stability for at least two hundred years, there is a strong bond between [161]
the peasants and their land, and agriculture provides them with the major source [241]
of their livelihood, production is mainly for subsistence and is carried on with a
simple technology, which includes as primary implements the digging stick, spade, [436]
and scythe; the island folk participate in a money economy, but barter still persists; [511]
a low standard of living prevails, and the birth rate is high; the family is of central [161]
importance, and marriage figures prominently as a provision of economic welfare,
the island is integrated into the county and national governments and is subject to [593]
their laws; the people long have been exposed to urban influences, have borrowed [581]
cultural elements from other rural areas on the mainland, and have integrated [177]
them into a relatively stable system; and, finally, the experience of living under [178]
foreign rule for over three centuries has created in the islanders an attitude of
dependence and, at the same time, one of hostility toward the government which [829]
continues to this day. The only conditions in Inis Beag which run counter to those
in most other peasant groups are low death and illiteracy rates. The Irish shun the [165]
term peasant as applied to individuals or communities, for the same reason that [212]
elitists in developing countries eschew the term primitive as applied to traditional [829]
cultural forms found in societies incorporated into newly formed states. The causes of this attitude must be examined next.

During the past hundred years, Ireland has experienced a vigorous nativistic 668
movement—provoked by seven centuries of English domination, linked with nationalism as the Irish sought to assert their independence, focused on the

668 fostered immorality, and created mental illness on a vast scale. Primitive and folk peoples, according to this view, represent man as he once was and could or should be again were civilized society drastically reformed.

000 Most of the ideas held by primitivists are as extreme as those maintained by nativists: primitive and folk societies possess simple, static cultures in which dysfunctional forms are rare; their economies are primarily subsistence ones, approximate the householding type, and lack competitive elements; social control is mostly informal; the family is the core social group and is a highly integrated and cooperative unit; religion is a pervasive force which sanctions most behavior and assures psychological security and social cohesion; and, religious dissent and skepticism are unknown. Primitivists also contend that primitive and folk peoples are content with their conditions of life, are seldom if ever mentally ill, and possess character traits that civilization has perverted. It is probable that primitivists would include all of the traits designated as Irish by nativists and would add many others.

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12 The antiquarians George Petrie and John T. O'Flaherty during the 1820s were the first scientists to undertake research in Inis Beag and the surrounding region. Since that time, there have been short and sporadic visits to the island by a variety of investigators, among them anthropologists, folklorists, geographers, historians, philologists, and others. Most of the anthropological research has been conducted by archeologists, anthropometricians, and linguists. Several archeological expeditions have examined thoroughly surface sites in Inis Beag, but no prehistorian has excavated as yet, and the accurate dating of artifacts scarcely has begun. Reconstruction of a number of ancient monuments by the government was made possible through the research findings of archeologists, and today site descriptions on mounted plaques mark the principal monuments. Alfred C. Haddon and C. R. Browne in 1892 and E. A. Hooton and C. W. Dupertius between 1932 and 1934 made anthropometric studies, the latter as part of the Harvard University anthropological survey of Ireland, which also included archeological and ethnographic investigations. The ethnographic study—reported in Conrad M. Arensberg's *The Irish Countryman* and Arensberg's and Solon T. Kimball's *Family and Community in Ireland*—was made in three communities of Co. Clare by these authors with W. Lloyd Warner; it was the first holistic ethnographic study made in Ireland, and my research in Inis Beag in its initial stages was only the third. (The second, by Rosemary Harris, is reported in a 1954 M.A. thesis in the University of London—see References.)

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[162] Linguists, as well as philologists and those wishing to learn Gaelic, long have visited Inis Beag. There now remain only a few areas along the western seaboard of Europe where Gaelic dialects still are spoken, and the island is located in one of these.[4] One-half the population of Ireland spoke the vernacular at the end of the eighteenth century, but by the middle of the last century the ratio had fallen to one-quarter, or approximately 1,500,000 speakers. Sixty years later the

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[4] The Celtic languages are Gaulish, Goidelic, and Brittanic, of which the first became extinct at the beginning of the medieval period, and the last two are represented today by the Irish and Scottish Gaelic dialects on the one hand, and the Breton and Welsh on the other. Two other related dialects are now extinct: Manx of the Isle of Man and Cornish, the British dialect of Cornwall (Dillon 1957:207).

number was reduced to only 580,000. The great famine of 1845 to 1852 and the 114 12
tide of emigration which followed brought about a rapid decline in the use of 197
the language. In addition, the elementary school system was directed toward 177
substituting English for Irish, and until 1922 instruction in most schools was given 178 •
in the English tongue. It was reported in 1946 that only about 40,000 persons in 162
the Republic used Gaelic as their true vernacular (Freeman 1960:166–169). [871]

All Inis Beag folk of the age of eight years and older speak English as well 191
as Irish, many with greater fluency than mainland peasants, for English is taught 197
in the school and is spoken with Gaelic in homes where a realistic attitude toward 779
emigration prevails. As in most of Ireland before 1922, English was employed as 871
the medium of instruction in the school, and sermons in the church were delivered 668
in English. even today the islanders confess to their priests in English—a fact 628
little known. The widespread ability of the folk to use English is not readily apparent. however, for several reasons: the people are subsidized by the government to have their children learn Irish at school, and curates have urged, even threatened, that the foreign tongue not be spoken on moral and nativistic grounds; teachers have ridiculed English speech idiosyncracies of certain students and adult islanders before their pupils and, as a result, have induced shyness among the youth. the secretiveness of many persons and suspicion of outsiders of others prevent them from revealing their linguistic aptitudes to strangers; a few folk are nativists themselves and shun the use of English for that reason; and, finally, I have witnessed islanders "cod" (jokingly misinform) outsiders as to the true language situation.

The English speech of the islanders, as is common throughout rural Ireland, 191
represents a syncretism of Gaelic and English forms; that is, English vocabulary 197
is merged with Irish grammar, and Gaelic phonemes and speech rhythms influence
English pronunciation. Irish terms commonly are incorporated into English speech,
and, conversely, English words form an important part of the vocabulary of the
folk when they employ the vernacular. Nativists are extremely critical of English 191
vocabularly borrowings, a point of view not shared by the islanders; the latter are 197
equally critical of the creation of new Gaelic terms by nativists for cultural innovations. 668
The folk, among themselves, also are critical of the language revival movement, since most of their number must emigrate to English speaking countries where lack of mastery of the tongue places them at a competitive disadvantage. Irish speech is judged by nativists as "good" or "bad" according to at least three criteria: the prevalence of despised English words, the retention of traditional Gaelic terms, and the richness of Irish idiom. Many observers, including linguists, believe that the "best" Gaelic in Ireland is spoken in Inis Beag and nearby islands; however, my wife and I had visitors from the mainland who were declared to be more proficient Irish speakers than the island folk themselves by Inis Beag people who met and talked with them. In this case, probing revealed that the evaluation was based on our friends' mastery of idiomatic expression and clarity of pronunciation. The ability of the native speaker to combine accent and idiom is known as *blas*, and the folk can ascertain readily whether a stranger has learned Gaelic "from the cradle" or "at the school" (called "Christian Brothers' Irish" after teachers of that order).

823 which give a trail its name. Folklorists have collected most of the place-names, and
[121] philologists have pondered the origins of no longer comprehended ones.

487 Trails also are referred to as roads or paths. Usually, they are bordered by
stone fences from three to a dozen feet apart and are surfaced with fine gravel
bound by clay. The 1842 Ordnance Survey Map shows that the network of trails
in Inis Beag has remained much the same over the past century, although several
[653] new paths have been added and all have been widened or otherwise improved. In
recent years, the government has subsidized road improvement for several weeks
each year during December and January. A senior and junior ganger supervise a
group of fellow islanders—composed of those owning the gravel and clay deposits
utilized, those owning land along the right of way, and those most needful of
unemployment assistance—daily until the money appropriated for that year gives
out. Nine major roads lead from the four villages to the back of the island; they
roughly parallel each other and are reasonably straight once they climb the
terraces. Crossing the middle of Inis Beag from one sound to the other necessitates
traversing numerous fields and climbing high fences, since the four short paths
running east and west linking five of the main roads at the back are found near
the Atlantic shore. On the north side of the island, a road connects Terrace and
Low Villages across the common land. This is the only major east to west artery
and is the most traveled of the ten trails; passing between the cemetery and school,
fences do not enclose it, and often drifting sand covers portions of it and must be
shoveled away. A series of short connected paths make it possible to travel east
and west along the terraces from one village to another above the main road.

312 Water is obtained from four principal wells near the villages and from
numerous, less dependable springs at the back and along the shores of Inis Beag.
Most householders also capture rain water from eaves troughs in barrels or small
312 cisterns. At one time, water was drawn from pools formed by the four major wells,
663 but now it is pumped from government built reservoirs. These reservoirs occasionally
are broken open and water obtained directly from them by islanders who
believe that the sealed structures and pipes leading from them to the pumps foster
contamination. The government also sponsors the construction of water tanks in
fields to accumulate rain water for pastured stock. Three of the wells are located
in rift valleys, and the fourth is near the chapel; a potential fifth one is in the
valley south of the lake, but at too great a distance from Terrace Village to have
312 been improved. Two minor unimproved springs used by villagers are situated on a
terrace of the western promontory and below the post office. The springs near the
coast and those at the back of the island are used mostly for watering stock, and
they tend to become dry when rainfall is limited.

311 Inis Beag viewed from the top of the lighthouse presents a somber yet
[333] strangely moving panorama of grey limestone pavement and fences, with patches
[241] of green here and there. Many hundreds of fields meet the eye, about half of which
support little or no soil, ranging in size from a fraction of an acre to over a dozen
333 acres. Three decades ago, it was possible to move easily from east to west across
[653] the back of the island because the fences averaged only three feet in height; but
[178] since that time, government subsidies supporting fence and field building have
caused most of them to be raised to heights of from five to ten feet. The folk are

skillful fence makers, and many incorporate various designs into their handiwork 333
by using stones of different sizes and shapes. Stiles or openings in the fences
connect a few fields, but gates seldom are employed; a man simply breaks down a
stretch of fence to allow a horse or a cow to enter a pasture, then quickly rebuilds
the fence. The outsider who believes this to be an easy task usually ends up with
surplus stones, a disfigured fence, and maybe bruised fingers when he attempts to
emulate the custom.

The hundreds of fields are located in dozens of land areas which bear 311
names. Most writers assert that each plot has its own name, but in reality numer- 241
ous fields are located in any one area. Thus, a man might send his son to dig 103
potatoes in Garden of the Cobbler, that is, in the plot that he owns there; another
man might go to milk a cow in his pasture in Garden of the Cobbler. A field will
be assigned a new name only if its owner has another one in the same area, and
then he might instead call it, for instance, New Field in the Garden of the Cobbler.
Some land areas bear the names of persons and animals, others refer to geographical
phenomena, while a few are linked to long forgotten historical events.

Over 50 coastal features also are named, from the Harbor of the Churchyard 103
on the north, to Point of the Periwinkles on the south. Most of the place-names 823
refer to rocks, flags, points, reefs, clefts, coves, channels, pools, low cliffs, events of
the past, and small strands which mostly have disappeared. The freighter ran
aground on a stony reef named Strand of the Sheep. This was a source of wry
amusement to the rescued crew, but at one time the beach provided safe footing
for sheep driven there to be washed before shearing or sale. One of the best known
features is Piper's Rock, which figures prominently in legend. It is named after an
island musician who long ago entered a cave above Terrace Village, which sup-
posedly travels under the west sound and connects with another in Inis Thiar, and
who never emerged again. In later years, bagpipe music was heard issuing forth
from beneath the sea off the rock now named after the luckless fellow.

Inis Beag has four landing places for small craft along its shores, but none 504
are large enough to accommodate the 550-ton government operated "steamer," 505
which visits the island two to four times weekly. The main pier, also called the
jetty, is 300 feet long and 15 feet wide and is protected on its windward side by
a wall five feet high. Located just west of the strand (see Fig. 9), it is the third [175]
structure to occupy the site; the first pier was built in 1878 and the second in
1913, and the present one is an enlargement of its predecessor. Smaller piers are
situated east of the lake, to provide Terrace Village access to the sea, and near the
lighthouse. The former is used mostly to unload peat, or "turf," imported by hooker
from the mainland and to carry passengers to and from the steamer, and the latter
only to transfer supplies from Irish Lights Service vessels which anchor in the
east sound. A slip on the west sound near Low Village is used by crews rowing
between Inis Beag and Inis Thiar in their canoes. When tourists come ashore in
the island, they usually do so for the thrill of riding the *curach* and viewing the
more accessible historical sites and the much publicized folk; they remain only
the hour or two that the steamer is anchored off the strand. Inis Beag has had [178]
regular steamer service since 1891, and before that time small sailing boats plied
irregularly between island and mainland.

tudes and practices; for the islanders do not wish to jeopardize unemployment 433
assistance and old age benefits, nor to be taxed in the future, and thus closely [124]
guard sources and amounts of income, even from relatives and friends.

Division of Labor

The division of labor between the sexes is more dichotomous today than 462
it was at the turn of the century, when there was an extensive sharing of the same 178
tasks by men and women. The latter now restrict their economic activities to the
home, for the most part, especially if they must care for infants and young children.
As soon as children can speak and walk, they help their mothers perform 857
household chores and run errands, such as carrying messages and procuring
groceries in the shops. But at age seven, following First Communion, boys spend
less time with their mothers and come to take on small jobs which throw them
more and more into contact with their older brothers, their fathers, and other men
of the island. By the time young adolescents pass Confirmation and leave school,
at the time of puberty, they are able to perform most adult economic tasks, and
their labor is of utmost importance to the family.

Among the major jobs performed by women outside of the household 462
round, and these by only a few younger women, are cleaning fish, carrying seaweed, [252]
planting potatoes, haying, growing vegetables, feeding and milking cattle, and [241]
caring for poultry. They also knit, crochet, ready wool for weaving, and tailor [231]
clothes for themselves and their families, as well as make sweaters, belts, and shawls [286]
for sale. In the several homes which accommodate tourists during the summer [294]
months, most of the responsibilities for their care fall on the women of the household. [437]
Men also do the tasks associated with fishing, farming, and the care of large
livestock just listed, and they participate in the job of thickening wool; all of the
other subsistence and income activities are exclusively male ones.

In the past, when fishing was a more practiced and laborious occupation [226]
than it is now, women not only aided men gut and cure fish, but they baited lines [178]
and did other affiliated chores as well. They also participated to a greater degree [222]
than today in collecting seaweed and in planting, cultivating, and harvesting crops [482]
of all varieties. Their involvement in the economic life of the island often demanded
that they transport heavy loads manually for long distances, especially
when they cared for all of the needs of both large and small livestock and aided in
kelp-making. It is not difficult to comprehend why women are mystified at the [561]
complaints of their single daughters about the hardships that young married [178]
women must endure.

Most folk admit that members of the present generation work less strenu- 178
ously than did those of two generations ago, when harsh landlords rather than a 461
benevolent government intruded so importantly into their lives. There is in Inis 561
Beag a widespread feeling of guilt among men, seldom expressed openly, about
being "lazy." It is my observation that island men, on the whole, put in fewer
hours of labor and expend less energy than workers in a typical industrial plant in
America. Inis Beag emigrants who return from England for visits invariably

561 complain about how difficult their new work regime is when compared to the
461 old. Young men are chided by their elders, as well as by their wives, about how
• 178 much less they labor today than did their forerunners and womenfolk. One of the
561 most popular conversational themes among old men is the contrast between
[521] generations—how much stronger and more industrious those of the "hero breed"
(a term favored by Mullen [1936] in describing Irish islanders of the past) living
[562] half a century ago were than men are nowadays. Women are provoked by how vociferously their spouses complain of the difficulty and endlessness of their labor, and yet how little initiative and industry they exhibit and how often they are idle. "Light work" or no work at all is customary on days when the steamer calls, when it rains heavily, on the day an islander dies and two days afterward, on Sundays and holydays of obligation, and at other times, contrary to the state of affairs which prevailed in the past.

461 Several men admitted to me their guilt about not working more often and energetically, and told me that many of their fellows "talk big" but do not match their words with deeds. All of them questioned the need for maintaining traditional patterns of labor in light of the many supports to the economy provided by the government. One candid islander suggested that a factory be constructed in Inis Beag which would employ all of the men two to four hours each morning—"Then people would have a steady income and a lot of time off. Now it is hard to get up in the morning and decide what to do, and by noon you are just reaching a decision." An even franker man, of the oldest generation, was unwilling to agree with his peers about how hard they had worked when young. He was willing to acknowledge that now "times are easier," but that when he was a youth men often were idle and were chided by their elders and felt guilty. Interestingly, he was aware of the phenomenon of primitivism, which he described as "the romantic notions writers have about us."

Land Ownership

311 Inis Beag comprises a townland of four 256-acre quarters, called "carrows."
423 Other land units are the half-quarter, the "cartron" of 64 acres, the half-cartron,
[131] the fourth or "croggery" of 16 acres, the half-croggery, the acre, and the three-
[804] quarter, half-, and quarter-acre. I have mentioned already that the total acreage of
the island is 1440, the strand and common land together make up 200 acres, and
the initial division of land among the local inhabitants probably was accomplished
[657] by a landlord late in the seventeenth century. Approximately 1000 acres are owned
[427] by the Irish Land Commission today and rented to 57 landholders, while two other
properties have been purchased from the commission and thus are owned privately. The acreage not accounted for represents shore areas which are useless for agricultural and grazing purposes. Rent is charged according to the fourth and is 5 shillings[1] per year at the present time.

The quarters of Inis Beag extend southward in roughly parallel fashion from the four villages, and each landholder possesses numerous fields, ranging in

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[436] [1] A shilling is the equivalent of 14 cents and a pound $2.80 in United States currency.

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size from fourths to quarter-acres, located along the quarter that his community 423
fronts. As a result of past inheritance and purchase, however, five Castle villagers
own plots in one or two other quarters, as do five High and two Low villagers.
Before field building commenced, the most extensive and fertile soils were found [241]
on the terraces; shallow and less widespread soils were situated just south of the [134]
terrace crest, while the back of the island was, and still is, mostly limestone pavement.
Landholders originally were assigned equal acreage in each of these three
areas, so that no one would have an advantage over his neighbors, and this pattern
still predominates. The quarters are separated from one another by high, thick [333]
stone fences which run almost the length of Inis Beag, and, from west to east, they [103]
are known as Quarter of the *Phoillín* (derivation unknown), Quarter of the Ridge
of Huts (after an ancient *clochán* settlement behind High Village), Quarter of the
Castle, and Quarter of the Lake; they embrace, respectively, 271, 261, 240, and
263 acres.

Fifty-nine of the 71 householders in Inis Beag hold or own land, and one 423
of these is an absentee holder. If an individual possesses four or fewer acres, he is 162
regarded as landless—"a man of few gardens"—and 11 men are so designated. Two
as yet unresolved disputes over the possession of land when resolved will add
two other householders to the landless category, unless the property is divided in
some manner among all four litigants by the Irish Land Commission. The folk [427]
prefer to rent rather than to own land, so that the commission will supervise
matters relating to inheritance "fairly" and with little cost to the litigants should
a dispute arise. The average sized Inis Beag holding is 15.7 acres, or approximately
a croggery, and 25 islanders hold this amount of land; in addition, one person has
40 acres, three 32 acres, one 28 acres, eight 24 acres, eight 20 acres, four 12 acres,
and nine 8 acres. Below is a chart summing up ownership data by village:

[103]

	Landholders and Owners	*Landless Householders*	*Average Sized Holding (in acres)*
Low Village	17	9	11.0
High Village	14	1	18.2
Castle Village	15	2	19.0
Terrace Village	13	1	16.4

The disproportionate number of landless persons in Low are, for the most part, [178] •
either descendants of fisherfolk who centered in that community in earlier times [226]
and did not possess land, or siblings of landholders who chose not to emigrate. [428]
They support themselves by craft work, keeping tourists, fishing, managing shops, [167]
and working for the government, among other pursuits. [433]

Farming

There is neither legendary nor historical evidence of when soil building 241
commenced in Inis Beag, but the process is an archaic one and is practiced in [173]
other communities along the Atlantic seaboard where appropriate seaweeds are [171]
available. Today, between 45 and 50 percent of the land surface of the island is

as "sea rods" and are accumulated by several islanders, dried, and shipped by small 824
boat in May or June to a factory on the mainland to be processed for their iodine [437]
content. One man received 90 pounds for his sea rods in the spring of 1960.
Ribbon and black weed usually are cut at the time of planting and are carried [241]
immediately to the fields, while the other two types are pulled throughout the
year and stacked along the coast or in outbuildings. The most effective seaweed
fertilizer is black weed, because its "sap" permeates the soil most rapidly; but it
and string weed are in short supply in Inis Beag and are most available to Terrace
villagers.

Any landowner can collect seaweed on the strand and along the shore 222
bordering the western part of the common land. So much red weed washed ashore
on the easily accessible beach during December of 1959 that men from all four
villages gathered it during the Christmas season, when work usually is at a standstill.
Along the rest of the Inis Beag coast, areas for seaweed collecting are 222
assigned to each village and to every family holding land within the community. 423
Low Village gathers along the west sound, although a short strip of shoreline is
assigned to High; Castle and High have collection rights along the eastern portion
of the common land, and they also gather from the Atlantic coast near the ends of
the roads leading from their respective communities; and, Terrace obtains its
seaweed along the east sound, except for areas near the lighthouse assigned to
Castle families. Long ago, a portion of the Quarter of the Castle was assigned to
the Quarter of the Lake, but the traditional seaweed rights near the lighthouse
were maintained.

On days suited for seaweed collecting, the coastline of Inis Beag is alive 222
with moving forms during the several hours that the tide has ebbed. Men wade [482]
out on the bared reefs to cut or pull plants, which they pile in woven sally rod
baskets, called "creels," and carry to horses and asses tethered on the paths above
"high water mark." Sometimes a man will lead his ass to the edge of the water
and load it directly, if footing is secure, and he may be aided in the task of carrying
creels by his wife and children. The weed then is transported to the fields and dried 241
on the fences or placed directly on the "gardens;" weed which has been stored
from the previous year also is spread on the plots, sometimes several weeks before
seeding takes place. There is a wide difference of opinion among farmers as to
whether or not seaweed should be put down dry, and, if spread, how long it should
be exposed to rain before "rotting" dispels the "juices." The same differences of
opinion mark the evaluation of the efficacy of various fertilizers and their use at
the several stages of "setting" a garden.

One of the tasks of the agricultural agent is to test soils and advise farmers 241
as to which kinds of seaweed and other fertilizers are best suited for their land. 654
But he seldom is consulted, and if his advice is sought, it is more often than not [177]
disregarded. Family and village traditions still guide farming procedures to a
great extent, and experimentation is a rarity. Terrace Village farmers employ all [178]
four types of seaweed, in part because it is a village custom, but also because they [184]
have access to most of the string and black weed in the island. This practice is
lauded by the agent as being scientifically the most effective; however, he takes no
credit for the Terrace idiosyncracy. Among other important duties performed by

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Figure 8. Transporting hay to an outbuilding

249 Those islanders who dwell in thatched houses or who own other buildings which are thatched grow rye, as do a few farmers who use it as fodder. It is planted in recently dug potato fields at the same time as grass and is ready for harvesting the next August. Rye for thatching is pulled rather than cut, and compressed into [342] small bundles which are propped against fences for drying. Pulling is preferred because grass and weeds can be separated out, and the roots will furnish friction [343] to keep the bundles from slipping when they are placed on the roof later. After drying, the bundles are carried to barns or outbuildings to be flailed, winnowed, and stored until used a month or two afterward. Flailing is done by striking the tops of the bundled plants against a stone placed a foot from an indoor wall, in such a way that the seeds are separated and collected at the base of the wall. Later the grain is spread on a flagging and winnowed by allowing handfuls of seed to [246] fall to the rock surface so that wind blows away the chaff. Rye used as fodder is planted with grass and cut when "green" at the same time that hay is cut, and is handled in almost the same way as the latter.

Care of Livestock

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[311]
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The export of fish, kelp, pigs, cattle, and sheep accounted for 90 percent of the income of Inis Beag folk in 1893, as reported by the Congested Districts Board. The sale of cattle and sheep ranked last, for at that time indigenous soils were not adequate either in extent or grass yield to support many livestock, and fields on the terraces were used mostly for farming. But over the past 70 years

kelp-making has disappeared, pig rearing has been abandoned, and fishing has 178
become mainly a subsistence pursuit engaged in by only a small number of islanders. 433
Hand in glove with these developments came the enlargement of arable lands [231]
and hence an increase in good pasturage, first necessitated by the intrusion of the [226]
eelworm and then stimulated by government agricultural supports. Farming [311]
became a more time consuming and lucrative occupation, as did the breeding and [654]
fattening of cattle and sheep for export, and the keeping of horses and asses [241]
expanded to accommodate the increased emphasis on farming. Thus, while the [231]
subsistence economy changed but slightly in two generations, the money economy
experienced a radical alteration.

At the present time, 59 householders own one or more cattle; 56, one or 231
more sheep; 22, one or more horses; and 58, one or more asses, among whom 8 have [422]
2 asses and 1 a jennet. The government regulates the breeding of both cattle and [654]
horses, with the result that only one man is licensed to own a bull and the horses
are mares or geldings. Cows are serviced for a 1 pound stud fee in the most [831]
inaccessible of fields, where children and tourists cannot observe the breeding
of the "beasts." Most of the asses, just as the bulls and stallions, are [232]
castrated, but in this case to prevent them from kicking down fences and braying
excessively when sexually aroused. Whereas almost all of the horses and asses and
a few cattle have been imported from the mainland, the sheep population is Inis
Beag sired. For the most part, cattle are grazed on fallowing plots, the few goats
on crags at the back of the island, and other livestock on indigenous pasturage.

Cattle owners usually possess a "milch cow," a yearling, and a calf, and 231
cows and bullocks are sold at two years of age. When a milch cow becomes old 437
and "dried up," it either is fattened and sold or, if the price on the mainland is [234]
low, butchered and eaten by the householder and his family, usually between
Allhallows and Christmas. "Cattle jobbers" visit the island to purchase cows and
bullocks, and in 1960 they were paying between 60 and 80 pounds per beast.
Excitement prevails on the strand on days when cattle are shipped off. Each [505]
struggling animal is pushed out into the sea by a group of men and then pulled
to a canoe by a rope attached around its neck; its head is held over the stern
transom of the *curach* for the trip to the steamer, where it is hoisted from the
water and swung high over the deck and into a hold. Sometimes an islander is [435]
forced by circumstances to import a calf, and in 1960 the purchase price of calves
at the fair in a nearby port was approximately 20 pounds; a colt cost about 50
pounds and an ass 5.

Probably the most striking difference between cattle rearing on the mainland 221
and in Inis Beag is that island cows are not stabled, but forage and are milked 233
throughout the year in the fields. Between November and March, they are pastured 234
south of the terrace crest on fallowing and the more luxuriant of the indigenous
plots, fed hay and rye carried to them from barns and outbuildings, and watered
by bucket from neighboring springs which are swollen from winter rains. Men [462]
and boys care for their needs during this period, and often spend as many as three
hours walking out and back to the pastures twice each day. With the coming of
spring, cows are moved to fields on the terraces where women and children can
feed and milk them, or men, who are now entering on the busy agricultural and

household. Some cats have reverted to a wild state and roam the back of the 231
island, sheep occasionally are killed by hungry dogs, and young people will enter- [541]
tain themselves by baiting dogs to fight. By and large, animals, especially asses,
in Inis Beag are treated roughly or with indifference.

Fishing

It is estimated that between 30 and 50 three-men crews from Inis Beag 226
fished regularly almost the year around at the beginning of the century. At that 174
time there were ten families of fisherfolk—six in Low Village, two in High, and
one each in the other two communities—who subsisted mainly on money obtained
from the sale of their catches or by bartering fish for needed goods and services.
Only farming and kelp-making intermittently interfered with the fishing regime [221]
of landholders, and fishing ceased altogether only for parts of December and Janu-
ary, when inclement weather and the Christmas season intruded. Women and [462]
children were deeply involved in the fishing endeavor, just as they were in farm- [857]
ing and livestock rearing, to free their menfolk for fishing. Crews ranged the
coast of Inis Beag and neighboring islands, the two sounds, the mainland coast
for 20 miles, and Atlantic shallows 5 to 8 miles offshore. Lines 40 fathoms in [227]
length were "shot" for ling and cod, and nets over a mile in length were drifted
to ensnare spring mackerel. At times when fish were particularly abundant, fisher-
men would be out daily for a week or two, arising long before dawn to have their
lines down before daybreak, and returning home as late as midnight.

Sixty years later, a sharply contrasting situation prevails, wherein not only 226
has the exporting of fish almost been discontinued, but fish no longer rank as a 177
major staple in the diet of the folk and are not even eaten several months of the 178
year. Nine three-men crews fished fairly regularly with nets and lines between [437]
February and October of 1960 and exported or sold locally part of their catches,
and two crews fished for lobsters. Fishing now is carried on within a mile of the
island, and only one crew ventured as far as the mainland in 1960. It was customary
in the past for crews to fish for two consecutive days off a mainland peninsula and
sleep overnight in their canoes or lodge in a village there, a venture which required
over 30 miles of backbreaking labor at the oars. Line fishing today is done in
shallow waters, only short nets are employed, and the men do not care to spend
long hours at their task. Elders bemoan the present state of affairs for several [829]
reasons, one of them being the loss of fishing lore accumulated over the centuries
—knowledge of the ocean floor, of deep currents, of the habitats and movements
of fish, not to mention knowledge relating to the manufacture and care of fishing
gear and fishing techniques themselves.

Most important of the factors which gradually have restricted fishing are
the actions of foreign trawlers—particularly Spanish and French ones, the shift of
migratory routes of fish, and long range changes in the weather. During the [648]
1890s, foreign trawlers commenced to fish the waters surrounding Inis Beag, and
in the decades since they have increased in number and have fished ever closer to
the coast, until now they often penetrate within the legal limit. Not only have

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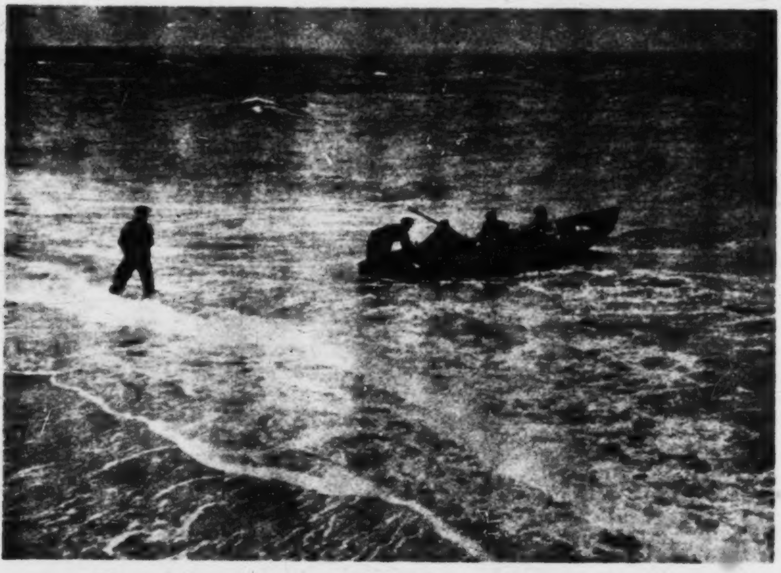

Figure 9. Launching a curach *from the strand in stormy weather*

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177 they taken fish which eventually would have found their way into island nets, but
178 they have destroyed with their trawls spawning beds of certain fish and captured
[648] lines and nets set out many miles in the ocean by Inis Beag crews. Another reason
why fish have become scarce is that shifting currents or other related factors have
[133] caused some fish, especially mackerel, to bypass the region. Other coastal areas
of Ireland from which fish seldom were taken in quantity in the past now are
thriving, and some islanders look hopefully to the future when once again migra-
[132] tory routes will change and bring the fish back. However, even if fish were more
[601] available today, it would be difficult to fish for them from *curach* for part of the
year because of worsening weather conditions. Storms have increased in number
and severity during the winters, and even the summers which once were relatively
"calm" are punctuated with long spells of "rough" weather which makes going
out in the canoes risky (see Fig. 9). Finally, a seldom admitted factor also must be
[829] considered—the indolence of the men. Aged fishermen assert that sufficient fish
are still available to make serious fishing a highly profitable occupation, but that
young men have been "spoiled" by government benevolence and are unwilling to
undergo the hardships entailed—"Why rise before dawn and row all day when
you can draw the dole?" During 1959, those crews which fished the most averaged
between 50 and 60 pounds per man for the season.

654 Whereas the efforts of the Irish Free State and the Republic to improve
228 Inis Beag living standards have been directed mostly toward stimulating agriculture
and animal husbandry, those of the government before 1922 were focused on
making fishing a more productive enterprise. The Congested Districts Board intro-

duced trawlers and other types of fishing vessels and financed their purchase by 654
islanders of the region, sent instructors to teach fishermen how to use the new 228
boats and gear, set up curing and storage facilities in the islands, facilitated the
shipping of fish to mainland markets, and attempted to regulate these markets so
as to ensure maximum profits for the folk. These efforts failed for the most part in [178] •
Inis Beag, and today the men fish from *curach*, much as did their grandfathers. [501]
The continuing effort of the government to improve fishing in the area is reflected
in instruction in modern fishing techniques at a school in a nearby island, and the [874]
successful operation of a number of government financed trawlers and other
fishing boats from there.

The islanders consider fish from the sea, which are netted, more palatable 262
and healthier to eat than those caught with lines and trawls, fresh water fish, and 226
fish which have been cured or frozen. Fish taken on lines, because they bleed, and 178
those enmeshed in trawls, because they suffocate, are thought to suffer in taste 825
and nourishment, as do those which are treated artificially for sale; and fresh water
fish are believed to be unhealthy to eat because they feed on refuse thrown into
lakes and rivers rather than on natural foods. Some folk exclude even mackerel
from their diet, since these fish "swim on the surface and eat everything dirty
afloat." We already have noted that Inis Beag elders prefer seaweed to chemical [241]
fertilizers; the preference for netted fish which feed on natural foods to fresh
water fish and mackerel which are contaminated is another example of a recurrent
cultural theme—the positive valuation of natural objects and the negative valuation
of artificial ones which come in contact with the human body. Other manifestations [751]
of this theme are the emphasis placed on folk medicines and the distrust [757]
of medicines prescribed by nurse and doctor, the belief that certain foods will
assure health and combat specific illnesses, and the fear of piped water and canned [312]
foods. I often was told that I could improve my eyesight by giving up my glasses
and rubbing dew on my eyelids, or by walking along the seashore to allow the
wind and spray to penetrate my eyeballs.

Over 30 varieties of fish are caught off Inis Beag, some with lines of 226
varying length and number of hooks, others in the four types of nets, and a few 227
with both lines and nets. Most important of the fish are: ling, cod, bream, gurnet,
haddock, and autumn mackerel caught with lines; plaice, turbot, rock fish, and
pollack both netted and taken on lines; and herring and spring mackerel captured
in special nets. Trammel and drag nets are used in addition to herring and
mackerel nets, and the most commonly used baits are gurnet, haddock, conger
eel, bream, herring, and limpets. Fishing techniques vary considerably, as do the [221]
times of the year when particular kinds of fish are available, the localities that they
frequent, and the baits which are most effective for each variety. Fishing crews
form at different times of the year, often to fish in certain areas for specific fish.
They are composed of both kin and close friends, and they tend to alter in membership [476]
from year to year as other activities intrude.

Before I leave the subject of fishing, I wish to correct three commonly held 226
misconceptions concerning Inis Beag men: they are all skilled seamen; because 181
they spend much of their time at sea they are of necessity able swimmers; and

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264 fork. It is not unusual for a man to eat six or eight large spuds at a sitting, and
415 the pot used to boil potatoes for a large family is piled high indeed. Spuds also
[231] are fed to cattle, poultry, and pets. The diet of families which are most prosperous,
[184] keep tourists, or whose members are acculturated is more varied than the diet that
I have just described, and these families utilize the shops more than is usual.

164 The excessive intake of carbohydrates, particularly by children, coupled
515 with the almost complete absence of dental hygiene, has resulted in universal
[262] tooth decay among the folk. Many people in their twenties and thirties already
wear false teeth, and toothache is the most common physical ailment. My wife
and I discovered but one adult who cleans her teeth, and she only once a week with
[753] a cloth and toothpaste. The islanders eschew use of the toothbrush for several
reasons: some believe that bad teeth are inherited or decay is a contagious disease,
and nothing can be done to prevent deterioration once it has set in; others equate
decay with the common cold, a natural affliction suffered by everyone which must
be accepted fatalistically (and masochistically); while still others regard the toothbrush
[626] as an English innovation or its use as an upper class affectation—"If I used
one they would say I had fancy ideas."—to be shunned on these grounds. A story
whose plot was laid in an island in the region of Inis Beag appeared in the
Saturday Evening Post, and was illustrated with photographs taken in Inis Thiar.
The Dublin model who portrayed the heroine in local attire was recognized as an
outsider by the folk who viewed the pictures because her teeth were white and even.

Clothing

291 The term traditional applied to the much publicized Inis Beag garb refers
177 to the homespun vests and trousers and blue woolen shirts of the men, the ankle-length
178 red and blue woolen skirts and a type of shawl of the women, and the
[184] cowskin shoes and woven belts worn by many men but only a few women. Some
of these articles of wear are shared with peasants of the region, or were in the past
and thus are vestigial; others are unique to Inis Beag; and all are in the process
of being replaced by mass produced mainland attire. Of 111 adult males in Inis
Beag, 11 have given up the local dress, as have 9 of the 85 adult females. Most of
these 20 have returned to the island from having spent time on the mainland or
abroad, and as a matter of prestige have chosen to retain the foreign costume.
Practically all of the young men past school age who have not been away dress
traditionally, but none of the women between ages 18 and 29 do; the youngest
women who wear the red or blue skirt are of the latter age.

294 Although most clothing worn by the islanders is tailored locally, everything
286 but the trousers and vests of the men are made from imported materials. Clothing
is tailored from cloth woven by the island weaver from Inis Beag wool which is
291 washed, dyed, and spun in the homes but carded on the mainland. The trousers
294 are brown or grey depending on whether a brown or black weft is combined with
[286] the white warp on the loom; they are called "britches" when styled differently as
to seam and hem. Vests also are brown or grey in front with backs dyed blue, and

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are worn over dark colored sweaters or blue woolen pullover shirts. Most sweaters 294
are imported, although some of simple design are knitted by women, and shirts are
sewn from wool sold in the shops. Under the outer layer of clothing are worn 291
lightweight grey woolen undershirts, known as "grey shirts," and heavier white [192]
woolen—"bawneen"—underpants, called "white drawers." The grey shirt is flannel,
but the folk use that term to designate homespun wool. Sometimes a bawneen
waistcoat is substituted for the vest, and in the heat of the summer may be worn
directly over the undershirt. Making up the remainder of the male costume are the
ubiquitous Irish visored cap, imported leather or locally manufactured belts and
shoes, and stockings. One of the most time consuming chores of women is knitting [462]
and darning stockings for their husbands and children. [286]

Just as the vest is the most striking item of male apparel, the red or blue [296]
skirt, or "petticoat," is the most striking female one, in particular the red petticoat
when viewed from afar against the dull colors of sand and limestone. The skirt, [286]
made from imported wool but dyed locally, is gathered and styled with a deep
tuck about nine inches from the bottom, and under this in winter is worn an additional
bawneen or red skirt. Sometimes a cotton petticoat and knee length
"knickers" also are worn, and several layers of cotton "vests" and shirts provide
needed warmth beneath the cotton or lightweight woolen handmade blouse during
winter. Blouses are styled alike with collars, long sleeves, and buttons down the
front, and usually are of subdued plaid material purchased in the shops. However, [301]
somewhat unusual designs and colors are admired, as are brooches worn at the
neck of the garment. Black knee length woolen stockings and black leather shoes,
both procured in the shops, encase the feet. Over the shoulders may be worn a
multi-colored or red island crocheted shawl of small size, called a "shawleen." In
winter and when attending church, women wear heavy brown woolen paisley or
black shawls outdoors which cover the head. The black shawl can be bought on the
mainland, but the paisley shawl is no longer available.

Infants of both sexes until toilet trained are clothed in plain bawneen
dresses. Then boys don short pants of varying length made from homespun wool,
which are worn with white sweaters or blue shirts. Corduroy trousers and jackets [178]
are coming into vogue for everyday wear, but on Sunday the white sweater always [292]
is worn. Older boys wear long woolen trousers or britches and blue shirts, and
children of all ages go barefooted or put on sandals during the summer and add
hand knit stockings in winter. Girls past infancy wear frocks sewn by their mothers,
bought in the shops, or sent by relatives from abroad. Whether shoes and stockings
are worn depends on the weather, and girls don sweaters and coats over their
dresses to afford them protection against the cold. Hairbows provide the only
decoration.

Underclothing is changed once a week, and women try to wash clothes [296]
that often as well. A man has at least one old and one new vest, trousers, and shirt,
and on Sunday and for special events he will wear his newest articles of clothing;
the same can be said of women's petticoats and accouterments. Winter and summer [513]
attire remains the same for both sexes except that some underclothing is shed
during the summer, and at night on retiring outer clothing is removed and some

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[513] underclothing retained. The latter practice reflects extreme modesty as well as
the need for warmth. Islanders have an obsessive fear of nakedness which permits
[515] them, after infancy, to bathe only their feet, hands, and face and precludes bathing
in the sea and the use of bathtubs.

Crafts

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434 Of the several crafts practiced in Inis Beag, only three are strictly income
[501] instead of combined subsistence-income activities: the manufacture of *curach* by
four men, the mass production of stockings by four girls in the factory at the
[295] coast guard station, and the fashioning of miniature canoes by a single man.
[294] Sweaters, woven belts, cowhide shoes, and the small multi-colored shawls are
[438] made both for local wear and for export. Most of the exported sweaters are sold
to a particular mainland firm for resale, as are all of the model canoes, and the
[657] factory is sponsored by Gaeltacht Eireann which markets the stockings produced.
[437] Other craft commodities are sold by the folk directly to consumers, most of whom
are tourists.

501 The long rowing canoe of Inis Beag is distributed widely along the west
[171] coast of Ireland, from Cos. Donegal to Kerry, and its seaworthy qualities as well as
the rowing skill of the crews which sail it are renowned. One of a number of
[174] varieties of the coracle, which has a heritage extending back to the Mesolithic, it
[178] is built of deal and oak lathes and covered with tarred canvas (see Fig 10). Before
canvas was introduced, untanned seal, cow, and horse hides were used for covering,
and these were reported from a nearby island less than 100 years ago. The *curach*
is approximately 20 feet in length, has a high pointed nose, is round bellied and
lacks a keel, draws less than 6 inches of water, and is rowed with narrow 10-feet-
501 long oars. These oars are bladeless for use in rough seas and are pivoted on single
502 tholepins rather than in oarlocks. The looms of the oars overlap, so that oarsmen
must pull cross-handed, and on long journeys a lug sail is hoisted to relieve the
crew. For the neophyte, rowing a *curach* cross-handed in a heavy sea can be even
more abusive of the hands than rebuilding a gateway in a stone fence. Most
canoes hold three men—are "three-oared"—but two-, four-, and even five-men
curach were or are used. Loads up to a ton and a half can be accommodated, and
trussed asses, sheep, and horses sometimes are transported in them.

501 Forty-two householders in Inis Beag own three-men canoes, among whom
[502] three have additional two-oared *curach*. The craft are stored upside down in "cots"
on either side of the strand along the margins of the common land, although
Terrace villagers use a small beach along the northeast coast of the island; they
are carried between the cots and the water upside down on the shoulders of the
[433] crew, and in that position resemble gigantic beetles. Two Inis Beag men are at
[322] work building canoes most of the time, and when they are not busy at this task they
construct furniture for local sale. Two other men manufacture *curach* occasionally,
[184] and another two who once built them have discontinued the practice. No canoe
makers are found elsewhere in the region; therefore, Inis Beag artisans serve the

The knit sweater
291 called a "ganzie," is not a traditional item of wear, as is
commonly asserted by writers, but was introduced in the 1890s as a cottage industry
[195] by the Congested Districts Board, which sent instructors to Inis Beag to teach
[657] the women there the manner of knitting the intricate patterns. Only children wear
the ganzie, for men always have preferred a dark sweater of simple design which
[531] is indigenous to the island. The patterns bear such euphonious names as "crooked
[552] road," "figure eight," "double diamond," "rosebud," "honeycomb," and "black-berry,"
[171] and most of them are common to the rest of Ireland, the British Isles, and
[196] other parts of Europe. The term ganzie, in fact, undoubtedly derives from the
Channel island, Guernsey. A widely held belief that each Inis Beag family has
its own distinctive sweater pattern, comparable to the Scottish tartan, by which its
286 drowned members are identified is unfounded. Seventeen women knit for the
291 mainland company, which supplies them with yarn, and are paid between 2
46 pounds and 2 pounds and 10 shillings by weight for each sweater. Some are able
to knit a ganzie in a week, but others take two or three weeks; one woman made 41
sweaters during 1959. A girl working steadily at the knitting factory can earn
slightly more in a week than one knitting a ganzie in that time, but most girls
choose to knit sweaters because they can be at home where their task seems less
[437] tedious. Some women prefer to sell their sweaters to tourists and can on occasion
dispose of a ganzie for as much as 6 pounds, but these women must purchase
their own yarn, and marketing is much less secure as tourists seldom come into
island homes. At present, the finest ganzies are knitted by women in Co. Donegal,
a fact which Inis Beag women admit privately.

286 The woven belt and cowhide shoes of Inis Beag folk have an ancient heritage,
294 just as has the *curach*. It is not known when the belt, or *crios*, was introduced
[173] into Ireland, but it has been worn for centuries by Portuguese seamen. Known as
[175] "pampooties," the island style footwear once was worn widely in Ireland, although
made from various hides and skins, and a century ago was cut from sealskin in
[196] Inis Beag. The term pampootie is of Scandinavian origin, and my wife and I have
heard it used among Danish peasants to describe their shoes. Today, a Danish
expatriate who has lived in the island for almost a decade supports himself by
weaving *crios* on a loom for the folk; he also sells them to visitors and to mainland
shops along with woven ties and bookmarks. Although "the Dane" has come to
monopolize the production of belts, several women occasionally make them by
286 hand for their menfolk and to sell. The manufacture of *crios* once was largely in
293 the hands of women, and they wore them sewn to their petticoats and tied at the
462 side, but now it is mostly men who wear them. Three yards long and two inches
175 wide, the belt is woven with a multitude of colors and designs and is worn wrapped
293 twice around the body and tucked in at either side of the waist. Elders prefer
traditional designs and shun the color green because it is unlucky, but young men
[178] are coming to like experimental patterns and all of the basic colors and their many
[822] shades. Contrary to popular opinion, there are no family designs. Some persons,
[777] however, ask for the same pattern every two or three years when they buy a new
crios if they believe that it has brought them luck.

291 Pampooties are favored in Inis Beag because they are ideally suited for wet
[177] rocks and frail canoes. The spiked heels of female tourists and visiting emigrants
who come ashore in *curach* are viewed with trepidation by crewmen, who are sup-

ported on the sea only by thin canvas. Most men are able to make pampooties for 291
themselves, but several islanders specialize in the craft and sell their wares to their [177]
fellows and to visitors. Usually cured hides are imported from the mainland, and 294
40 pairs of pampooties can be fashioned from a whole cowhide. They are cut to 281
shape the foot, have the hair outside, are secured front and back by lacing, and [437]
when used daily will last about two months. To be pliable, they must be kept [463]
moist, so they are dipped in water when they become dry and hardened; however,
because they are worn constantly in wet grass and sand, they seldom lose their
softness.

In this chapter, I have considered all of the important means of gaining a 128
livelihood in Inis Beag. Some I have discussed at length, while others I have 434
touched on briefly and will reconsider later; but two thus far not referred to—
piloting and recovering objects washed ashore—I would like to take up before
ending the chapter. Only one pilot remains in the island, but early in the century 434
men of several families guided vessels through the east sound to ports on the main- 502
land. Then it was customary to place lookouts at the high points of Inis Beag to 437
scan the horizon for masts of approaching ships, and often several canoes would
race miles out to sea in order to be first to contact a potential customer. The [178] •
Terrace villager who still plies the trade seldom contacts likely vessels now, and
more often than not his services are refused once he rows to a ship, what with
modern charts and navigating instruments. Piloting is still very much alive in 502
the memories of the folk, and one of the popular genres of folklore is the humor- 539
ous anecdote dealing with real and imagined experiences of pilots. One of these
concerns a crew fishing in the east sound which was hailed by the captain of a
passing schooner. Although not a pilot, an old member of the crew claimed that
he was and climbed aboard, and the captain agreed to hire him after he said that
he knew the sound and coastline well. Soon after, the ship struck bottom "with a
great bump," and the enraged captain shouted, "I thought you said you knew all
the rocks in the sound.", to which the islandman replied in a quiet voice, "I did,
and that's one of them." The same old man in another tale earns the job by
boxing the compass in Gaelic for the captain; the humor of this story lies in the
fact that the captain does not know Irish, and the islandman, who in turn does
not know the points of the compass, simply recites terms of reference[2] for kin
in a rhythmic manner.

One of the oldest of Inis Beag traditions is the "law of wrack"—the right 421
of islanders to confiscate objects of value which have washed ashore. If a person 422
discovers wrack, he establishes ownership by placing a stone atop it or by carry-
ing it above high water mark, and no one else will claim it. Some islanders wander [829]
along the shores at dawn seeking what objects may have washed in during the
night, especially timber, and those who habitually engage in this pursuit are known
disparagingly as "wrack-boomers"—so poor that they must depend on salvage.
During the two world wars, the economy of Inis Beag was bolstered by the im- [176]
mense amount of wreckage which drifted in from torpedoed ships, and the [722]
islanders still reminisce about particular visitations of flour, planks, and other [433]

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[2] See p. 75 for a definition of terms of reference.

361 It is apparent from the size of these settlements that some such term as hamlet
might be more appropriate than village, but I have chosen to follow island usage.
Within each village, no house is further than 50 yards from its nearest neighbor,
some even sharing the same gable, and a myriad of paths serve to link single and
grouped dwellings with a main road.

184 Although the traditions of Inis Beag and islands in its vicinity can be
designated as a subculture of the Irish system taken as a whole, nevertheless
there are marked differences in custom between them. One might suppose that
cultural variation would be slight in an island as small and stable as Inis Beag, but
[829] the remarkable fact is that there are differences among the four villages. The folk
[628] are well aware of inter-village, inter-island, and island-mainland cultural variability, and they also possess a well defined image of their own way of life. At this
point, I would like to examine the attitudes of the people toward their own communities, Inis Thiar, the mainland, themselves, and outsiders who visit or live
among them.

829 High and Castle Villages attract the fewest opinions. The inhabitants of
628 the former are accused of arriving late at island affairs, especially to mass in the
184 chapel so close at hand, and dwellers in the latter of keeping ferocious dogs which
[231] bark at night and molest visitors. Until recently, each Castle household had from
two to four dogs, and it was possible for those living in Low to know when a
visitor making a night visit had arrived in Castle by the outcry of the animals.
[512] Castle people, like those in Terrace, milk their cows earlier in the day than do
[823] other islanders, and since both settlements are located on the upper terraces and
command exceptional views of the mainland coast and sea around, the dwellers in
each claim that their panorama is the most inspiring.

829 The numerous attitudes toward Low and Terrace Villages mostly reflect
628 their positions in the island and resultant differential acculturation; generally
184 speaking, the local culture becomes more traditional as one moves eastward from
177 Low, the jetty, and the strand. It is often said that Terrace folk "are strangers to
178 the rest of us" and resemble the inhabitants of Inis Thiar, whom many writers and
[342] scientists claim are the most traditional of Irish peasants. More cottages are
[461] thatched and the indigenous costume is more in evidence in Terrace than elsewhere, and the villagers there are the earliest risers and hardest workers and tend
to arrive early for events, in contradistinction to their High neighbors. Families in
Terrace are considered more closely knit and cooperative and the people more
[275] self-reliant than those in the other communities. The men spend less time in the
pubs, do not need drink to "give them courage" to sing and dance, and are livelier
and more extroverted at parties. Not only do Terrace folk believe that their village
is best located as to beauty of land and seascape, but they claim that it is quieter
[241] and the air is healthier there than elsewhere in Inis Beag. Another Terrace custom
often cited is that of farmers using all four types of seaweed as fertilizers and
setting their gardens in the same manner; farmers in the other settlements use
[421] only two or three kinds of seaweed and set their gardens in a variety of ways.
Lastly, the practice of seeking wrack is most prevalent among Terrace men. The
freighter ran aground near Terrace, and the men there were said to have acquired
more salvage than other islanders as a result of their being close to the ship and

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inveterate wrack-boomers. The separateness of Terrace villagers was made most 184
apparent at the time of the shipwreck through the aggression, both overt and covert, 177
directed against them by their fellows. 178

The behavior of Low villagers, on the other hand, is often the opposite of [421]
that of Terrace people less than a mile away; for instance, the folk of Low are the 829
latest risers and milkers, the least industrious, and the most prone to spend time 628
in the pubs. They claim to be descendants of the earliest immigrants in the seventeenth 184
century and are the most boastful of family genealogies. However, most of [512]
the landless householders live in Low and as such are held in low repute by landed
villagers. People here are the most receptive to tourists, and the two pubs which [173]
attract outsiders and the several private homes in which tourists may lodge all are [423]
located in Low. It is said that Terrace folk do not need and are indifferent to
tourists, whereas Low villagers could not survive without them, either economically [828]
or psychologically. Although islanders today visit nearby islands and the mainland [484]
less than did their forebears at the turn of the century, the people of Low are
considered the most traveled, past and present, of the local population.

As for attitudes directed outward, most islanders regard the culture of 829
Inis Thiar as more traditional than their own. Often heard is the assertion that 184
70 years ago the inhabitants of the two islands were almost alike as to behavior 177
and beliefs, but the coming of lighthouse and coast guard families, and a permanent 178
curate after 1919, to Inis Beag introduced successive changes which gradually [173]
widened the cultural gap between the two. Another factor of importance hindering
acculturation in Inis Thiar has been its lack of good landing facilities for visitors to [504]
come ashore; the steamer must stand off the jetty of Inis Thiar in the unprotected
and often turbulent sound and be met by canoes, whereas it can approach closely
the strand of Inis Beag, between the jetty and a point of land, where under most
weather conditions it is relatively calm.

Visitors to Inis Beag also hold the same opinion of the two cultures, and 184
the most often made comparison between the islands is the Irish spoken in them. 171
The people of Inis Beag and Inis Thiar recognize slight differences in vocabulary, 19
grammar, and pronunciation between the two speech communities, but they seldom
rank their respective proficiencies, unless outsiders in one island assert that the
Gaelic spoken in the other is "purer." Once a tourist angered visiting Inis Thiar
fishermen in my presence by publicly pronouncing that the Irish in Inis Beag is
superior, and that he would send his children here to learn Gaelic and then to
Inis Thiar to learn English; the tongue-in-check statement was prompted by a
discussion of the linguistic skills of the publican in the neighboring island, who
is called "the English speaker" because of the rapidity of his speech and chronic
misuse of esoteric English words. Indigenous nativists are far more numerous and [829]
militant in Inis Thiar than in Inis Beag, and the anger of the fishermen reflected [186]
pride in their own culture and their belief that it is more traditional than that
of Inis Beag.

Inis Thiar folk are thought by their neighbors to the east to be more industrious 628
and extroverted than themselves. They are believed to rise earlier, work 829
longer and more energetically with fewer breaks for contemplation or gossip with

181 793

dies suddenly and is deprived of Extreme Unction at his deathbed. The compensatory 795
rite performed later for the deceased who has been interred while the curate 779
was away is thought to be less efficacious in shortening the stay of the soul in [789]
Purgatory. [775]

In the past, the amount of social control exerted by clerics has varied; a [829]
few have been concerned mostly with fulfilling their religious duties, but the greater 793
number have attempted in a variety of ways to regulate the lives of the islanders 795
—to restrict such activities as visiting, gossiping, courting, dancing, and drinking 178 •
spirits. The curates have tried, in general, to maintain the indigenous culture, 824
especially the Gaelic tongue, and to discourage change, halt emigration, maintain the moral standards of the folk, and limit anti-social behavior. I have heard both islanders and curates defend the *status quo* in Inis Beag, including its poverty, by asserting that, "This life is of no importance, and its suffering must be borne for
the glory of Heaven to come." In the absence of local police, curates sometimes [625]
have performed the functions of *gardai*, and since 1960 have combatted a growing [178]
rash of juvenile delinquency, which has included, among other misdeeds, the [738]
destruction of property outside of homes in which parties are held, petty theft, and molestation of girls from the mainland who visit during the summer.

The techniques of social control utilized by curates are many and mostly 793
negative; they include weekly sermons, lectures to students in the school, talks 681
with individuals who need guidance or reprimand, the use of informers (a word so detested in Ireland that I have substituted respondent for informant in this book) and confessions, the allocation of indulgences, and, in extreme cases, the refusal of sacraments and the placing of curses. It is difficult to overestimate the degree of fear of the clergy and anti-clericalism which have been inculcated among the folk by the more immoderate measures employed by priests during the last century. Sermons deal both with spiritual messages based on the scriptures and church pronouncements, and with instruction and censure directed toward past or anticipated actions of the islanders in concert or of particular persons. Talks with individuals may take place in their or the curate's home, and often result from information received by the priest from informers or the confessional. The informers, it is said, are usually the housekeeper of the curate and her family, and children who are intimidated by the priest to reveal talk and behavior of their parents and others; however, certain folk are known to bear tales to the clergy and are shunned for this reason. Well aware of the power that the confessional gives the priest over their lives, islanders are outspoken in its condemnation, and many will not confess particular sins, especially those of a sexual nature, to a curate known to assign severe penances and to carry matters beyond the confessional.

The awarding of indulgences represents a positive social control method 793
and has been used frequently, I was told, to obtain needed monetary contributions 795
and services from the folk. Although the priest cannot excommunicate a recalcitrant [431]
parishioner, he can achieve the same objective by forbidding confession and absolution and the other sacraments to him, and the islanders report its threat and
use as a sanction on several occasions in the past. Even more feared is the "priest's [789]
curse," which in Co. Clare ". . . can bring ruin upon a prosperous house; can turn an unbeliver's head upon his shoulders; strike blindness . . ." (Arensberg 1937:28).

the folk. Chronic negligence in the care of chapel and school is regarded as a 793 829
symptom of the indifference of the clerics (or laziness, according to some), as is their seeming unwillingness to provide leadership at crucial times. The intrusion of the clergy into spheres of island life where their influence is unwarranted, according to local opinion, and their methods of controlling behavior give rise to the greatest amount of criticism, but need not be considered further at this juncture. As elsewhere in Ireland, and a source of countless humorous anecdotes and jokes, the style of life of many priests contributes to anti-clericalism. The comfort of the curates' home (particularly the new one erected since 1960, by one islander called "the house indulgences built"), their menu, their offering of tobacco and whiskey to guests, their visits to mainland, Continent, and even America, are all discussed frequently and resentfully by the folk.

Linked with the much criticized life style of clerics are the many demands made on the islanders for monetary contributions. It is felt that the diocese is wealthy enough to support the parish priest and his curates and need not "keep the people poor" by forcing them to donate money and services without charge for their upkeep. In addition to regular offerings on Sunday, the people are called on to proffer more substantial sums at Christmas, Easter, and on several other
occasions during the year. My wife and I made donations at Christmas and Easter [123]
despite the urging of many not to do so—"You are hated by the priests, so why give them money?" The names of contributors and their donations are announced from the pulpit or posted in the chapel. This practice is another control technique of sorts and infuriates many of the folk.

Other major sources of antagonism toward the clergy are their poor Gaelic 793
and the fact that they urge the people to speak only Irish yet converse among 829
themselves in English; their criticism of valued island customs, particularly of 178
pagan reinterpretations; their conservatism and resistance to change, which results in the folk being ill prepared to emigrate when they must; their susceptibility to influence by the king, especially those who are newly graduated and are uncertain of themselves and their role; and their demands on canoe crews which must row them back and forth to Inis Thiar and other islands, often in dangerous weather. A conception of what the curate "ought to be like" was voiced by a pious but troubled woman: "He should be humble, not have money when so many poor are about, not treat the people as inferior, and not be afraid to work hard."

It is difficult to ascertain today whether the headmaster or the king should 624
be accorded the dominant position, after the curate, in the informal social control 876
system of Inis Beag; for in recent years, the power and prestige of the former have [626]
been waxing and those of the latter waning. Headmasters were formerly older [793]
men with families whose tenure was long, who were much involved in local affairs [178]
and worked closely with the curate, who were politically active and backed candidates and tried to influence island voters, and who maintained social distance
although considered "one of the people." For their teaching and other services, they [666]
were provided with food, given *curach* transportation without charge, and afforded other amenities by the folk. The house that they and their families occupied until recently is located in Castle Village, near both the old and new schools, and was
owned by the diocese. Headmasters now are younger and often single, and are [793]

624 partners to come to Inis Beag to confer with him, knowing that they were ill with
556 influenza, which resulted in a serious outbreak of the disease shortly afterward. A
[793] fire which broke out in a storage room next to the house of the king some months
[731] after the shipwreck was viewed by irate islanders as divine retribution for his
"greed and selfishness."

624 In Ireland, the term "gombeen" is used to demean the usurious shopkeeper,
444 but this word is directed against the king only by those who most dislike him, and
275 then to connote what they consider a combination of piety and avarice in his
behavior rather than his economic practices. His role as moral guardian, with frequent instruction and reprimand as to manners and misdemeanors to men in the pub and children visiting the shop, is deeply resented by many. He does not care to have women make purchases in the shop, where they can observe men drinking and be observed in turn, ostensibly on moral grounds; he urges that children do the marketing instead, not for the convenience of their mothers, it is said, but because he can overcharge and short-change them more easily. To dissuade women from shopping, he reads out their lists and talks with them about family affairs in a loud whisper, so that they have no privacy. The men complain not only of his alleged practice of overcharging and short-changing them late at night when the pub is overcrowded with "light headed" drinkers, but also of his criticizing their actions in public, his frequent closing of the pub before midnight, and his refusal to serve those whom he feels have "taken too much" or those about to attend a party where more drinks will be proffered them.

624 Supporters of Fine Gael and Labour, among others, object to the manner in
664 which the king curries the favor of Fianna Fail representatives and campaigns for
666 the party. He is accused of using illegal tactics, such as haranguing voters outside
of the school as they enter to cast their ballots, in his endeavor to keep Fianna Fail
624 in power. A more serious charge related to this one is his opposition to change in
657 Inis Beag which might benefit the population as a whole, an opposition which
178 explains his support of political party and church—both conservative forces. It is
asserted that, just as the government wants to preserve the Gaelic language and supposed Celtic virtues of the folk and the church their strength of belief and morality and thus underwrite the *status quo*, the senior publican wants no changes which might threaten his economic position and control over the lives of the islanders. To this end, he is thought to use his influence with priests and politicians who are in a position to modify local conditions.

184 Absent from Inis Beag is the evening *cuaird* of old men, which plays such
573 a decisive role in the political and social life of villages on the mainland. It is a
887 clique of visitors who usually convene at a particular home, called the "old men's
house," to formulate local policies.

> 626 Much of the community's relation to the outer world is debated here and deter-
> 573 mined by the old men's agreement. . . . It is here that petitions for roads, for relief work in winter, for extension of agricultural prize schemes, and all of the "political" business of the county council and its committees originates on the side of the local community. It is here too that the community reaches its unanimity in party voting. . . . Here it is too that the community makes its appraisal of its own members and those with whom it is in contact. And that appraisal tells quite heavily in the behavior the community will adopt toward the person or

> conditions appraised. . . The community regulates its internal affairs through 573
> the *cuaird* as well. It is here public opinion is formulated. There is nothing formal 626
> about the decisions made upon the incidents arising from day to day. The local
> community has no implement with which to enforce its will. But it has the power
> of gossip and . . . boycott (Arensberg and Kimball 1940: 190–191).

Decisions of this sort and their sanctions in Inis Beag rest largely in the hands of [793]
government officials and the priest, headmaster, and king. [875]

Many folk long have believed that the island needs a council with repre- [624]
sentatives from each of the four villages serving on it, to foster cooperation and 628
to formulate policies which bear on the welfare of all. After independence in 623
1922, a move was made to form such a council, but the civil war interrupted the 178 •
process; since that time, according to the islanders, the opposition of curates and 641
king, none of whom have wanted their vested interests threatened, has succeeded [793]
in blocking the formation of such a body. Other forces at work, however, are the
lassitude and ambivalence toward authority of the people, and their dislike and
jealousy of one another. They complain of the lack of leadership, or of the "wrong"
kind of leadership, as in the case of the priest and king; but they are unable or
unwilling to expend the energy needed to get themselves organized and "pull
together" for the common good. Often those who advocate the formation of a
council will, in the next breath, express their dislike or distrust of its potential
members, or a desire to remain independent of its collective will should it run
contrary to their own. A vacationing emigrant who said, "We have no sense of
civic pride and responsibility but think only of ourselves.", assessed the situation
accurately.

Among the traits attributed to Inis Beag folk by nativists and primitivists 181
are self-reliance, independence, and individualism. But the self-reliance of the 177
islanders has become undermined increasingly since 1891 by a benevolent govern- 657
ment; their independence is severely curtailed by restrictions imposed on them
by curate, headmaster, king, and their fellows; and their individualism is a figment
of literary imagination disguising a strict conformism. Inis Beag as much as any
community is characterized by gossip, ridicule, and opprobrium, which gain their
effectiveness as social control mechanisms from the deep concern of the folk with
"saving face," and which serve to limit freedom of action and behavioral idio-
syncracy. When asked to rank the major deficiencies of island life, the people 829
almost without exception place the prevalence of malicious gossiping, along with [521]
poverty and the intrusion of the clergy into secular affairs, at the head of their list. [793]

No matter how much the islanders detest gossiping when they are its
victims, they nevertheless welcome every opportunity to engage in it. News of an 521
event passes quickly by word of mouth from Low to Terrace Villages, and varia- 203
tions in the description of the event are usually numerous due to the distortions of 571
rumor. In order to circumvent gossip, parties are organized at the last moment and
invitations issued by small boys moving quietly from door to door in the night; [574]
persons will leave the island—sometimes to emigrate, visit the hospital with a [512]
serious illness, or enter an order—without previous announcement, running from
their homes to the strand to board the last canoes for the steamer; and mail is
posted just prior to the arrival of the steamer and picked up immediately after it

Numerous factors are weighed by the representatives of the future spouses 584 before a match is consummated. Uppermost in the minds of the relatives of the 583 man is the size of the dowry that the woman will bring to the marriage. In the decade 1951 to 1960, the average dowry was 50 to 60 pounds, but at least one reached 100 pounds. This sum now is used to finance the wedding party, but once it [178] went to provide the passage and "settling in" money for an emigrating sibling, to furnish the dowry for a daughter, or to make life more comfortable for the aging parents. Land and capital (and other status attributes soon to be discussed) possessed by the father or widowed mother of the man are the focal concern of the woman's relatives during matchmaking. Among the factors which enter into the deliberations of both bargaining parties are: the presence in either family line of mental illness or other afflictions which can stigmatize, the economic skills and industriousness of the potential spouses, the number of cognates (relatives on all sides of ego limited only by degree of kinship) which compose the two kin-groups and their propensity to assist and defend (and not to engage in disputes), and the mutual attraction of body and personality of the future spouses. The folk believe that young persons 581 approaching marriage "should have known each other for a long spell" and that 582 "the two should be alike"—as to family position, education, and temperament. It is common for a woman to choose not to marry a man to whom she may be attracted because his mother is overly jealous and domineering, or there are "too many old people in the house."

Most weddings take place on Tuesday during the hour before noon, at the 585 direction of the curate, but at one time they were conducted between four and [178] five o'clock in the afternoon, so that the guests could hurry back to the groom's house "to make a night of it;" the morning ceremony means that festivities commence in mid-afternoon and the party often is "stale by nightfall." Each family [273] invites its circle of relatives and friends who congregate at the respective domiciles in the morning, where the men are served whiskey. The groom's entourage then accompanies him to the house of the bride, and another "round" is proffered them before the procession is formed for the journey to the chapel and back. Three men [189] lead the column at some distance from the bride and groom, to ward off those with the evil eye or any other malignant forces which might threaten the couple. Close behind the bride and groom are the "best man" and "maid of honor," followed in order by the two fathers, male guests in a group, and at the end female guests; the two mothers do not attend the wedding, nor does the bride's mother participate in the matchmaking or allow her daughter to return home until a month following the nuptials (Formerly, she did not enter her daughter's house until a grandchild was born.).

Grooms long have worn mainland attire for the ceremony, but only in 585 1960 did the first bride do so. Before then, the woman wore a new blue petticoat, 292 accouterments purchased in shops at a nearby mainland port, and a shawl for the 177 first time, draped over the shoulders. Her hair had remained uncut until this day, and she and the groom wore borrowed items of clothing—she usually the shawl [302] and he a coat or tie—to bring luck to their marriage. During the nuptial service, 585 the man not only places a ring on the finger of his bride, but gives her seven shillings with which to buy later a holy picture, or some other object of her

582
621 three sisters, and ten of two—and they tend to visit together often and lend mutual
593 economic and emotional support.

591 When a man marries, his parents relinquish the holding, and its direction
428 passes into the hands of the newlyweds. Arensberg and Kimball talk of the "west
342 room" complex, which may exist in many parts of peasant Ireland but does not in
822 Inis Beag. Houses in north and west Co. Clare "with remarkable uniformity" are
776 aligned east and west, and on the son's marriage the old couple moves into the
westernmost room "behind the hearth." This room is linked with the Celtic
supernatural, for fairy paths are thought to be located along the western side of
many houses, and the pagan afterworld—the Isle of the Blest—is a sunken land
mass in the nearby western sea (Arensberg and Kimball 1940:134–136). In Inis
Beag, on the contrary, over one-third of the domiciles since 1841 have been aligned
north and south, fairy trails are found mostly at the back of the island, and a
retiring couple may choose any of three rooms (or more in modern homes) to
move into. The west room of Co. Clare is called simply "the room" in Inis Beag.

342 Thirty-four of the 71 inhabited buildings in the island have thatched roofs
[178] (see Fig. 8), while the others are antiquated houses which lately have been renovated,
mainly by replacing thatch with slate, or are newly built. The last of the
[177] traditional "cabins" or "cottages" were constructed in the 1930s, and the first of
[657] the modern ones during the 1890s—with two stories initially, and styled and
subsidized by the Congested Districts Board. Old and renovated houses are rectangular
in shape, are constructed of whitewashed stones with concrete floors, and
have a large central kitchen with doors or half-doors to the outside both front and
back. "The room" is beyond the kitchen at one end of the building, and two bedrooms
(one in the most ancient cabins) are at the other. Lofts for sleeping are in
the gable of the roof above "the room" and bedrooms, and are entered by ladder
[372] or staircase from the kitchen. Fireplaces share a common wall and chimney between
the kitchen and "the room," as they also may between the two bedrooms; but the
kitchen hearth is the most used, and in some homes is not permitted to die out.

351 The space between the cottage and the low stone wall and outbuildings
[343] surrounding it is called the "street." Outbuildings at the back include a toilet and
various storage sheds—for spuds and turf sods in particular, although the latter
[244] often are stacked instead against a gable of the cabin. In a portion of the street or
a small field beyond the wall, a garden for vegetables is maintained for easy access.
342 The kitchen doors of the house sometimes open into small halls in the front or
back, or both, and when the weather is not too cold or blustery, the door opening
[262] to the street on the windward side is kept closed and its opposite open. In the
[264] kitchen, which is the center of family activities, are: the fireplace at which cooking
[415] is done with pot and cooking ovens hung from an iron hook; the table around
[778] which the family eats their five daily meals; the sideboard, known as a "dresser,"
filled with "delph"—both everyday and "best" china; the religious shrine with
[352] "blessed lamp" surrounded by religious pictures and sacred objects; and, occasionally,
a "settlebed" which, when closed, serves as a bench during the daytime.

354 The hearth in the kitchen is indented into the wall to provide two hobs,
[352] or seats, and on a chilly or dampish day the folk will nestle inside the fireplace and
[616] sit tightly together on a bench drawn up close to the turf fire for warmth. This
[593]
[178]

fireplace has a profound psychological significance in Inis Beag and, in a sense, is 354 593
a force drawing the family together. Now that only three hookers transport peat 178 •
from the mainland—when in the past there had been more than a hundred—and
the price of turf increases considerably year by year, coal or bottled gas stoves are
being used by most families. Although coal and gas are cheaper to burn, and coal
throws out more heat than turf, the coal fire in the hearth does not foster
camaraderie as does the peat fire. The replacement of fireplace by stove and the
"stink" and dirtiness of coal are denounced incessantly by the islanders, and the
disappearance of the "sweet smell" of burning sods and a multitude of customs
associated for generations with the peat fire are lamented.

Many functions are served by "the room." It can accommodate the displaced 342
parents after their son has married, if all agree, for it has a bed which can 353
serve them (as well as distinguished guests, spectators at parties, and now tourists
and summer language school students). This chamber is the best kept of the house,
with the newest and most valuable of the furniture and often a linoleum floor,
and its walls and ceiling are whitewashed or painted frequently. Family heirlooms
and objects of sentimental value, which are parted with only as a last resort, are
found here. Religious pictures adorn the walls, and on the mantel over the fireplace
are photographs of the family going back generations, especially of those
who have emigrated or are deceased. When "the stations" are performed every [788]
two decades in the cottage, the mass is read in "the room," and certain rubrics
used in this ritual are afterward kept here. Finally, the chamber serves as a dance [574]
floor when the crowd at a party in the house overflows the bounds of kitchen,
hall, and street.

The social universe of the islanders is divided into four segments: close 571
kin or "friends" (Previously, I have used this word in the American sense.), distant 602
kin or "those I have a relationship with," other islanders, and outsiders or 609
strangers. "Friends" normally extend generationally to include ego's parents, grandparents, [572]
children, and grandchildren, and collaterally to include his affines (spouse's
kinsmen), siblings, and first, second, and third cousins—termed, respectively, "four-of-kin,"
"six-of-kin," and "eight-of-kin."[1] With the intensification of inbreeding, 835
most of the folk are eight-of-kin, and this is why the parish priest examines the 602
genealogies of families at the time of the match. Marriage between first cousins is 582
forbidden, between second cousins demands permission from the bishop, and
between third the consent of the parish priest. Distant kin are relatives extended 602
collaterally beyond eight-of-kin, while outsiders include the curates, teachers who 609
are not islanders, lighthouse keepers, the Dane, tourists of local renown, and, as I
have just indicated, even in-marrying women and descendants of recently arrived
immigrants (also, of course, inquisitive anthropologists).

Although inheritance and succession are patrilineal on the island, descent 428
is bilateral—traced through both agnatic (father's) and uterine (mother's) lines 611
--with a strong agnatic bias.

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[1] These positions are pictured horizontally (generationally) and vertically (collaterally) [113]
in block form in Arensberg and Kimball 1940:96 in the chapter "Kinship System." The [601]
Irish kinship system is common to peoples of Western Europe and America (the Eskimo
type), and much of the kinship information reported by Arensberg and Kimball applies to
Inis Beag.

556 tunity to create additional capital; they are content to rest on their psychological [157] laurels, are limited in their aspirations, and are indolent. They betray a smugness [124] of attitude much resented by their less prestigeful fellows. A woman spoke contemptuously of the "great estates" boasted of by these men, when she discussed with me the many land disputes that she had witnessed during her lifetime.

554 When one asks the folk to rank prestige symbols and the positions of 556 individuals in the status hierarchy, the only consensus which emerges is the 423 placing of land and capital at the apex of the rank order of symbols, the assigning of men who possess these in greatest quantity to the top of the hierarchy, and the placing of landless men at the bottom. Least prestigeful among the landless are those who are descendants of fisherfolk, most of whose families were recent migrants to Inis Beag. An example of the verbal abuse to which they are subjected is a remark made to one of them by the king in a heated argument, who said, "Why don't you spend your time gathering periwinkles like your father?"; the man replied with equal venom, "Who was your father, a king?" Other prestige symbols delineated by the folk, although not mentioned by all and variously ranked, are advanced education, prestigeful kin abroad, economic skills, and singing, danc- [178] ing, and storytelling abilities. Strength and courage occasionally are cited, but they are considered symbols of a past era (which nativism and primitivism make difficult to assess) and have come to lose much of their significance.

554 Only one family in the island prides itself on its material possessions, 556 because of the influence of the householder's brother in the United States who [123] sends remittances, so it is said, and often visits Inis Beag for lengthy stays. I was asked to take photographs of this family, whose members posed before various pieces of modern furniture and appliances, to be sent to relatives—the only such [356] request ever made of me. There are a few families, however, which pride them- [515] selves on the neatness and cleanliness of their houses and streets and the appearance [171] of their members, and they are apt to denigrate families which are slovenly. The [184] lack of emphasis on material possessions in Inis Beag presents a startling contrast to the situation which prevails in most of the Western world, including many peasant societies and the mainland Irish; equally contrasting is the apparent lack of opprobrium attached to doing relief work on the roads and receiving the dole.

555 Although 28 islanders have received some secondary education during the 871 past 15 years (excluding priests and nuns), only 2 have attended university—both of them before the Second World War at University College, Dublin. Two women and a man have become teachers, and the former have returned to Inis Beag to teach in the national school. Most of the advanced students today are preparing to teach or nurse or are gaining technical skills, and it is not expected by their parents that they will return to the island to live permanently. Families are boastful of their members with advanced education, and those families without such representation often urge their children to do better in the local school, and try to muster financial support for their high school education if scholarships are not forthcoming. I was told by a man disgusted with the lack of interest in school shown by his son, "The man who uses a pen is better off than the man who uses a 567 spade or trammel net." Prestige also is gained through having a close relative 793 become a nun or priest or achieve success in the business or professional world, [555]

557
especially outside of Ireland. Four islanders have entered orders—two priests and 793
two nuns—and have brought their families not only prestige but an aura of sanc- [555]
tity; it is believed by the folk that God bestows grace on his earthly representatives
and on their kin as well. Even the king is thought to receive some measure of
supernatural support for the period of time that he spent during his youth, as is
rumored, as a servant at Maynooth Seminary.

The folk rank one another according to their ability to row the *curach,* 564
fish, farm, knit, and perform other economic tasks, although such talents do not 555
bring the prestige that they once did. I often have heard individuals chaffed [178] •
publicly, sometimes even to their faces, for possessing less than average skills, and
many persons have told me privately that they admire or envy the skills of others
and wish that they themselves were more adept. A man who owns land in the [241]
quarter of another village told me that he works painstakingly in setting a garden [626]
there, since his efforts will be appraised by the alien villagers and pitilessly con-
demned if found wanting. Women gain most of their prestige through perform- 554
ing well the tasks ascribed to them by the division of labor. The economic skills 461
of individuals who lived in the past are lauded more than those of contemporary [462]
islanders, reflecting the shift of emphasis in the prestige system; this is far more
the case with singing, dancing, and storytelling, as well as with the display of
strength and courage. Institutionalized storytelling had disappeared from Inis Beag 555
before 1960, although raconteurs of note still hold forth in the pubs and at small [538]
social gatherings. These persons, and the several who excel at singing and dancing, [178]
are held in high repute. Probably the best liked of the islanders is a man of 72 555
years who is admired for his wit, charm, friendliness, and agile step dancing. 156
When drinking in the pubs, he enjoys telling anecdotes about his past experiences, 159
singing and dancing, expressing a simulated sadness at his bachelor estate, and
poking sly fun at the behavior of certain folk. Although he is landless and thought
to be overly lazy, he is ranked high in the prestige hierarchy because of his esthetic
talents and occasional *joie de vivre.* His recluse brother of opposite temperament
remarked sadly, "Even the stones of the island know him, but no one knows me."
Another landless man, now deceased, who was about the same age, enjoyed high
status because he was a traditional storyteller, was noted as a young man for his
exceptional strength and athletic and rowing prowess, had spent a decade in the
United States, and by reading had educated himself well above the level of most
of the folk.

Stories abound concerning once famous men of strength and courageous 539
deeds in Inis Beag and the surrounding region. These anecdotes are recounted 555
more during the summer months than the winter ones, when tourists are within 181
earshot and can be suitably impressed. Acts of courage performed by folk in the
past mostly deal with mishaps which occurred to crews while fishing or traveling
to and from nearby islands or the mainland. The feats of strength performed by [526]
former athletes—such as putting the shot, long jumping, and "throwing the half- [147]
hundred"—are well within the realm of possibility, but other feats usually are
grossly exaggerated. Examples of the latter are the man who, grasping the base
of the front leg of a chair in which sat a person weighing 11 stones (154 pounds),
lifted it with one hand, also the man who raised over his head "with ease" a
struggling opponent of 16 stones (224 pounds) in a pub fight.

4

The Supernatural and the Esthetic

Catholicism

BECAUSE OF THE WRITINGS OF NATIVISTS, most visitors to Inis Beag believe 771
that the Catholicism of the folk embodies an ideal unattained even on the
mainland, where the faith is thought to set an example for all of Chris-
tendom. In fact, however, the worship of the islanders is obsessively oriented [776]
toward salvation in the next world with a corresponding preoccupation with sin
in this world; there is a marked tendency toward polytheism in the manner in
which they relate to the Blessed Virgin and certain Irish saints; rituals and sacred
artifacts, Christian as well as pagan, often are employed by them to serve magical
ends; and, finally, many observances that they hold to be orthodox Catholic are in
reality idiosyncratic to Inis Beag or to Ireland. Christian morality in its outward [626]
manifestations, as we have seen, is realized to a remarkable degree, but it is less
a product of the emphasis placed on good works as a means of gaining salvation
than of the techniques of social control exercised by the priests and an over-
whelming fear of damnation.

Coexisting with Catholicism in Inis Beag are pre-Celtic, Celtic, and early 771
medieval Christian retentions of religious beliefs and behavior. It is these which 778
are accentuated in the writings of primitivists, some of whom have ignored alto-
gether Catholicism in the lives of the folk. Nativists and primitivists part company
in the matter of religion in peasant Ireland, and writers of nativistic persuasion
have exerted the most influence on visitors to Inis Beag, who are preponderantly
Irish Catholic. Theologians and scholars in Ireland label as pagan unorthodox
religious forms from any historical period, and many of these have become rein-
terpreted with similar Catholic elements. The pagan array of supernatural beings [776]
includes a variety of spirits and demons, witches, ghosts, and phantom ships; among
other retentions are taboos, signs which foretell the future, charms and incanta-
tions of a protective nature, folk medicines, and the aforementioned emphasis on
natural foods and other products impinging on the human body.

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775 there's going to be a life hereafter," someone shouted out from the audience,
"There won't be.", and the others laughed so uproariously and for so long a time
that she had to discontinue singing.

775 Only Catholics can enter Heaven, so most islanders claim, and among the
faithful only saints go directly to Heaven at death, as preordained by God. All
others who escape Hell must sojourn in Purgatory, where the temporal punishment
of sins previously forgiven must be endured, and the guilt of unrepented
venial sins cleared away. Conceptions of Purgatory are vague, but it is felt that
severe punishments are meted out there, and that the stay of most Catholics is a
long one, even though mitigated by earthly indulgences and penances. Theirs is
an example of what some theologians term a "dreary interpretation of Purgatory,"
with its emphasis on the sinful nature of man. Several times we were told that we
would enter Heaven even though not Catholic, because "religions are like canoes
which set out on separate courses for a mainland port, yet all reach their destination;"
always we were cautioned not to disclose this personal belief to the curate.

796 The most significant religious events of the year in Inis Beag are certain
Catholic feast days, masses performed in homes twice each year, marriages, funerals,
visits to the holy well, and several pagan observances. Of the many feast days
commemorating the mysteries of the faith and honoring particular saints, eight are
holydays of obligation in Ireland: Circumcision, St. Patrick, Ascension, Corpus
Christi, Assumption, All Saints, Immaculate Conception, and Nativity. On these
days the folk attend mass, abstain from work, and do not conduct business. The
feasts of St. Patrick and Christmas among these, and the lesser feasts of St. Brigid,
Easter, the patron saint of Inis Beag, St. John, All Souls, St. Martin, and St.
[178] Stephen, are considered the most important locally. Although pagan elements are
[182] incorporated to some extent in all feast days, reinterpretations are most in evidence
in the feasts of St. Brigid, St. John, St. Martin, and St. Stephen, and thus they will
be taken up later in the chapter.

785 Lent in Inis Beag is a period during which men are hard at work farming,
796 and social activities are at low ebb. The laws of fast and abstinence during Lent
[262] impose no hardships on the folk in light of the simplicity of their diet, with meat
often absent from the table and only one full meal taken during the day as a
matter of course. The standard of living in the island is such that for most people
[273] there is "too little to give up anything." Many islanders abstain from drinking
alcoholic beverages during Lent, and will imbibe only on St. Patrick's Day, March
17th. Following the shipwreck (six days after Ash Wednesday in 1960), when
salvaged Scotch whiskey was present in vast quantities, several men who had
"sworn off" spirits took to drinking Vat 69 in the privacy of their homes; when the
practice became known publicly, they claimed that they were "off the stout" only,
796 which is what most men drink ordinarily because of the high cost of liquor. St.
[571] Patrick's Day is much anticipated because it is a holyday of obligation when work
ceases, drink can be taken by abstainers, and there is a dance in the boat house in
the evening. The dance did not materialize in 1960, because the time of flood tide,
when the grounded freighter could best be boarded, coincided with the time of the
[771] dance. Before mass on St. Patrick's Day, boys in groups search for shamrocks, which,
[292] if found, will ensure the finder "riches" in the future. Women that day wear

green sweaters, men shamrocks in their buttonholes, and girls green hair ribbons, 796 [292]
and there is much visiting in the afternoon following a special meal. Women [574]
spend the last weeks of Lent preparing new clothes for their spouses, their children,
and themselves, which first are worn to mass on Easter. Eggs are accumulated
before the feast day so that each member of the family will have several to
eat at breakfast before mass, and in some homes the children gather and hide eggs
the week before Easter to see who can collect the most by Sunday morning.

June 14th in Inis Beag is "pattern day," derived from the word patron, 796
which honors the patron saint. Until the 1920s, when suppressed by the clergy, 527
this day and the two days following it rivaled the 12 days of Christmas in festivity. 628
Then it was customary for people from nearby islands and the mainland to
visit Inis Beag, and the local folk in turn to attend pattern days in islands and
communities in their vicinity. The celebration commenced with the digging out [782]
of sand from the church of the patron saint and from his tomb, or "bed," so that
during the night of vigil islanders and visitors could pray while walking around the
grave and rest in the church to gain special favor from the saint and from God.
The day itself saw masses celebrated in the chapel, and athletic, dancing, and other
competitions staged on the strand and contiguous common land. Tents were erected
to accommodate vendors of food and drink, as well as solo and figure dancers who
performed to the tunes played by visiting musicians of note. Most visitors departed
at the end of the day, but those who remained were invited to take part in two
more days of revelry in certain island homes, where dancing, singing, and drinking
prevailed day and night. It was the prevalence of factional fighting and promiscuous [578]
behavior engendered by drunkenness which prompted the church to restrict [834]
the traditional practices of pattern day. [273]

In the 1930s, the priest inaugurated a custom of celebrating mass on pattern 796
day in the church of the patron saint; but it persisted for only two decades, and
today the bed is cleared of sand but the church is not. My wife and I observed [778]
only 11 persons praying and resting during the night of vigil in 1960. Miraculous
cures, appropriately embodied in legends and anecdotes, are claimed for persons [789]
who have propitiated the patron saint in this manner in the past, and most of those
who still observe the vigil are seeking relief for physical ills. The most recent cures
reported are for spinal meningitis, rheumatism, a deformed knee, and an eyeball
pierced with a thorn. No work is done on pattern day now, and a dance in the [527]
evening, seldom attended by visitors other than tourists, is the only vestige of the
gayety which once marked the day. This dance, just as the St. Patrick's Day dance,
did not take place in 1960, even though an accordionist and two other mainlanders
came out by *curach* to attend it; the shyness of local girls rather than the tide was
the disruptive factor on this occasion.

All Saints is a holyday of obligation November 1st, and is followed next
day by another feast—All Souls. One of the most popular of humorous anecdotes [539]
deals with All Saints' Day in a neighboring island, where once long ago the Church
of Ireland pastor gave the day off to men working for him; when ten days later
they asked to be off once again for St. Martin's Day, he inquired with seeming
pique, "And where was Martin on All Saints' Day?" The feast of All Souls is also 796
a workless day in Inis Beag, although the cemetery is given its one cleaning of the 527
[782]

at breakfast and lamb, if available, at supper, and the family goes out only to attend 796 [262]
mass. Many homes are decorated then for the 12 days, with cards received and
sprigs of holly placed on windowsills and fireplace mantels and crepe paper and [358]
balloons hung from the ceiling. More visiting among relatives is done between [574]
St. Stephen's Day and Epiphany than at any other time of the year, and guests are
treated to cakes and drinks, which include liquor.

Whereas the folk during the Christmas season are the most optimistic and 764
expansive, they are the least so for the three or more days following the death of
one of their number. Work halts until after the burial of the deceased—"out of
respect for the body"—and subdued talk focuses on death and salvation and the
tribulations of life on earth. It is at this time that the masochism of the islanders is
most in evidence, and they are most prone to discuss the teachings of the church,
to reveal doubts concerning the afterworld, and to bemoan their own sinful lives.
In evaluating the career of the person who has just died, an attempt is made to [761]
explain the cause of his demise, and both natural and supernatural causes are considered.
Most deaths are attributed to the natural causes of old age, illness, and
accident; but death also can come as the result of God's will and the actions of
the Devil and malignant pagan forces, such as witches of the evil eye and ghosts.
The immediate mourning for one who dies before the age of 40 years is deep and 765
prolonged, particularly if small children are left with only a single parent, and it
is believed that "the good die young." One of the most disliked traditions in Inis
Beag is that of formal mourning for a year, during which time social activities for
close relatives of the deceased are curtailed severely; they cannot attend parties,
sing, dance, or play music in their homes, and men must reduce in number their
visits to the pubs. Life is so dull as a matter of course, so the complaint is, that
placing restrictions on what few social activities are available makes it almost
unbearable.

When a person dies, his body is "waked" in the house until taken in procession 764
to the church during the late afternoon of the day following death. Another
procession escorts the coffin to the cemetery early the next morning, after it has
stood the night unattended near the altar. How many folk attend the wake and [602]
compose the two processions depends on the number of the dead person's kin, his [554]
prestige status, and how well he was liked. The "laying out" of the corpse for the
wake is done by close female relatives of the deceased; they wash the body and
powder its face, put on the clothes or habit, and prepare the bed on which the
corpse will rest. A man may be attired in new white bawneens and *crios* and a
woman in her wedding dress, but it is becoming more common today for the body
to be clothed in a purchased brown habit. On the breast the hands are crossed and
rosary beads entwined in the fingers, and the corpse is covered up to the chest
with a white sheet which later is used to wrap it up in the coffin. The manufacture [322]
of the coffin usually is assigned to one of the canoe and furniture makers, who [463]
assembles it crudely with unpainted boards and delivers it the night of the wake
or the following morning.

The wake now is a solemn occasion in most of Ireland, and is attended for 764
the purpose of praying for the soul of the dead and sympathizing with the relatives 178
of the deceased. But until recently it was a gay affair, merrier than a wedding,

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178 characterized by storytelling, games of various sorts, contests of strength, taunting
and mocking, mischief-making, and factional fighting (O Suilleabhain 1967:
764 26–129). It is hard to imagine a wake more somber than that which takes place
in Inis Beag. Most of those who attend it do so before midnight and stay two to
three hours, coming and going at will, while "only those who own him stay all
night." Each visitor on arrival prays briefly at the bedside of the deceased or in the
doorway of the room before expressing condolences, and at midnight all who are
anywhere in the wake-house kneel and recite the responses of the Rosary intoned
[178] by the curate. Immediate kin express their grief in muffled sobs beside the corpse,
but the ancient wailing lament for the dead, known as the "keen," no longer is
[273] heard in Inis Beag. Tables and benches are set up in the kitchen on which the
[276] men sit silently or converse in whispers with their neighbors, as they drink stout
or whiskey and pass around clay pipes offered them "to keep the night awake."
[562] Most of the women congregate in the room of the dead, where only very old
women smoke pipes. I have counted as many as 18 minutes of absolute silence at
a wake and have never heard laughter.

[562] Before the procession to the church forms, men tend to gather in small
groups outside the house of the deceased and women gather inside the house.
After the corpse is placed in the coffin, close relatives and even friends shake the
hand and kiss the face of the dead person before the top is nailed down; then the
box is carried to the front street and placed across two chairs for prayers to
be said and holy water sprinkled over it by the priest. A white sheet is draped on
the casket, and six pallbearers shoulder it and carry it through a gap made in the
stone fence to the road which leads to the chapel. The pallbearers are both agnatic
and uterine kin of the deceased, excluding his sons, and two of them have the
further duty of digging the shallow grave that night or in the morning before the
body is interred. Moving slowly behind the coffin bearers, the procession is headed
by the spouse and sons of the dead person, followed by his daughters, then women,
and finally men in a long, slow moving, silent column; children other than the
offspring of the deceased seldom join the procession, and the sexes walk separately.
[793] The curate may or may not lead this procession and the one the next morning,
sometimes preferring to go ahead to church and cemetery by himself. A son of
the dead person treats the grave diggers to stout in a pub before they set out with
spades for the graveyard, as he does the pallbearers after they return from the
[178] church. In the past, the grave was dug as part of the funeral service, but this
custom was altered as the cemetery became filled and occasionally diggers by acci-
[538] dent broke into previously interred coffins revealing their contents. A number of
grisly legends and anecdotes tell of islanders buried alive by mistake, or whose
bodies were partially preserved, as revealed by such accidents.

The procession from the chapel to the graveyard leaves the modern road, as we saw in Chapter 1, to follow an ancient, obliterated trail past a church believed to have been buried beneath the sand centuries ago, and then climbs the long hill of kitchen midden and sand to the gate of the cemetery. Here the column breaks up, some people going to the graves of relatives to pray and others to the newly opened grave. Men and women kneel separately at the graveside for the service (see Fig. 11), and many of the women cry as the casket is lowered into the shallow

796 to put their property in a state of good repair, which, in retrospect, is regarded as
a benefit, however much they might have complained of the labor involved during
the previous weeks.

778 The sacred well, probably appropriated from the Druids 13 centuries ago,
[174] still attracts the folk and occasionally pilgrims from Inis Thiar and other islands.
[184] On the mainland, patterns often were associated with holy wells named after
[178] saints, but this does not seem to have been the case in Inis Beag. It was customary
until about ten years ago for those who came to pray here to attach bits of cloth,
[798] rosaries, or sacred objects obtained from holy places of pilgrimage on the mainland
and abroad, but this practice was halted by the clergy as smacking of pagan-
[788] ism. Now it is visited for religious purposes mostly by small groups on Sunday
afternoon, and by persons about to emigrate and their families who come to pray
[789] for the good fortune of the soon departed. The water in the spring is not considered
[755] holy, but capable of "bringing the grace of God and the saint," and if it is drunk
during prayer, it is believed to be especially efficacious for curing sterility, among
other afflictions. In this century, a partially blind islander is believed to have re-
gained his sight after paying nine visits to the well on successive Sundays, and
[789] other miraculous cures from earlier times are reported. Those who come to the
spring always seek a tiny fish or eel in the water, which, if observed, is merely a
good omen to some but an assurance of reaching Heaven to others. Attaching rags
to the well and seeking cures and omens there are all examples of reinterpretation.
[312] The spring also is used as a source of water by farmers who pasture stock in nearby
fields and by thirsting passersby.

Pagan Supernaturalism

771 Pagan supernaturalism is disavowed by the folk, and it is difficult to know
798 how widely held are beliefs in this sphere. That they are held is indisputable, as
178 attested by the active efforts of curates up to this day to eradicate them. Youth of
[793] the island overtly deny the existence of other than church approved spiritual en-
[787] tities, although the most outspoken disclaimer of paganism among them is visited
occasionally by the ghost of his father, who urges the continuation of a family
feud. But elders cling tenaciously to indigenous beliefs and practices, about which
they are extremely secretive for fear of being ridiculed by outsiders and their more
skeptical fellows. Defensive about being labeled backward, the islanders feel that
[829] the "superstitions" they are said to hold most contribute to this impression. When
the folk talk of pagan retentions and reinterpretations, they ascribe them to those
who lived at the time that their parents or grandparents did, or to certain of their
[776] superstitious contemporaries. A notorious dissenter, who sometimes has occasion
to patrol the shores of Inis Beag before dawn, antagonizes his neighbors by derid-
ing them for their fear of venturing after dark to the back of the island, where
[115] fairies and ghosts hold sway. On telling him of my intention to spend a night
[775] resting atop a *clochán* near the Atlantic coast, he said, "The only thing that will
happen is you'll hear the cocks crow in the morning." He is the only person who
admitted to me that he disbelieves the teachings of the church concerning the soul

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and its fate. In further mocking his fellows for their apprehensions about death 798
and its aftermath, he proclaimed that the soul, "if there is such a thing, goes 178 •
nowhere after the heart stops beating." [115]

Celtic deities no longer are a part of the belief system of the islanders, but [775]
the culture heroes of the Iron Age—such as Cuchulainn, Finn, and Oisin—still are 771
extolled in legends, and the promontory fort and other ancient monuments and 178
some of the geographical features (for instance, glacial boulders) in Inis Beag and 776
nearby islands are explained by the actions of Celtic heroes. Spirits, demons, and [538]
witches of many sorts are the supernatural beings from the Celtic, and possibly [823]
pre-Celtic, era which figure most importantly in the pagan segment of the folk
religion. They have become incorporated into orthodox Catholicism by being
declared "works of the Devil" by those who admit to their existence (It is said
that two priests of peasant background have admitted to this belief publicly in
Inis Beag.)—a reinterpretation resorted to by many primitive and folk peoples
under the duress of acculturation with dominance. The spiritual entities most
linked with the Irish, both in writings and in popular imagination, are the trooping
and solitary fairies, known to the islanders as the "little people," "good people,"
or "gentry." In Inis Beag, only the leprechaun and "red man" among the numerous
solitary fairies are known. William Butler Yeats numbers the banshee, mermaid,
pookah, and water horse among the solitary fairies (Yeats ND :76–77), but these
are not regarded as such by the folk (The latter two are animal spirits, or demons,
rather than human spirits.); also found in Inis Beag are the sea spirit, or "headless
body," and other minor spirits and demons.

Fairies seldom permit themselves to be seen, but most of the islanders 776
have experienced their presence, if only through having objects mysteriously mis- 787
placed by them or hearing them sing and cobble. These beings differ considerably
in appearance—according to type, sex, and age—but most of them are knee-high
and wear green jackets, flat red caps, and buckled shoes. The trooping fairies live
in *clochan* and thorn bushes and spend most of their time feasting, singing, dancing,
fighting, playing games, and making love. A spirited hurling match played by
fairies on the strand was described to me by an observer who had witnessed it
from a canoe approaching the island; he and his mates rowed close enough to
overhear the creatures call out to each other by name. Small whirlwinds are a [821]
sign of their passing, and a farmer who was haying and failed to say the proper
"God bless them.", as such a wind stirred his field, was punished by having all of
the cocks that he had accumulated blown away. One verse of my ballad, poorly [123]
received by most islanders, tells of men who were afraid to board the freighter for
several nights after trooping fairies had been seen dining in the mess and a ghost
pacing the deck. Fairies disregard human beings most of the time, but they can
harm those who disregard or speak ill of them, as well as play "fairy pranks" out
of sheer capriciousness. One of their favorite modes of attack is to cast "fairy [172]
darts" at their victims; on the mainland, these are prehistoric flint artifacts, but in
Inis Beag they are any small pebbles supposedly thrown from the sky to cause
bodily harm. An Inis Thiar man collected a number of darts allegedly cast at him [798]
by irate gentry, only to have the collection confiscated by the curate in whom he [793]
indiscreetly confided. The most feared practice of trooping fairies is that of steal- [763]

persons considered overly superstitious. Interesting to note here is the fact that 184
even before the beginning of this century, strength of belief in the pagan super- 178 •
natural varied among the folk. 771

Three water dwellers found in the ocean surrounding Inis Beag are the 776
mermaid, sea spirit, and water horse. At least one and maybe three mermaids are 778
associated with particular locations along the coastline of the island. This spirit
usually is found sitting on a rock with her fish tail in the water and combing her
long hair, although she has been seen hovering over the surface of the sea in a
"robe of mist." Discussion of her in the pubs always induces embarrassment among
the men, because her perfectly formed female upper body is nude and not always
hidden by her tresses; she appears to delight in exposing herself to the puri-
tanical folk. The sea spirit is called the "headless body" for the reason that his
seaweed covered hulk lacks any appendages. Like the seal who bears a human
soul, he favors following in the wake of *curach*—bobbing up and down in the
water and staring balefully at the seamen with huge eyes. Only by dropping an
object containing gold into the ocean deeps, which the spirit finds irresistible, can
his pursuit be impeded short of rowing back to the island. My wife and I brought [123]
to Inis Beag a foot-high statue of a troll, purchased two years before in Norway,
made of moss with large glass eyes, which we hung from the wall of our kitchen
(as we had from the dashboard of our car) as a good luck charm. It aroused
excitement among fishermen who visited us because of its resemblance to the
headless body; one man reasoned that this being must inhabit all of the northern
seas, and probably arouses equal consternation among Scottish and Scandinavian
seafarers. The water horse is a demon counterpart of the mermaid, with black body
of a steed and tail of a giant fish. Until 40 years ago, it lived in the fresh water [178]
lake of Inis Beag, where it was seen on certain nights traveling abreast the surface
with its head held high and mane waving in the wind. Now it is seen only at
sea and infrequently at great distance.

The single pookah of Inis Beag resides in a Copper-Bronze Age tumulus [764]
(see Fig. 12), which became a medieval cemetery with rough headstones still in [823]
place; located on the western margin of the common land, it is known as the
Hill of Ferns. In the Middle Ages, the church urged systematic reinterpretation of 175
Christian and pagan elements (It was advocated as early as 601 by Pope Gregory 779
VII in a letter to priests who were proselytizing the primitive Britons.). This policy 778
is attested in Inis Beag and neighboring islands not only by Christian graveyards
being located contiguous to pagan ones, but by Christian church buildings incor- 177
porating Druidic temples and Celtic holy wells being appropriated by Christian [346]
worshippers. During the day, the "dog of the tumulus," as this demon is called, [778]
will twist the limbs of unwary individuals who chance to fall asleep on the mound, 776
and at night it is known to race across the sands of strand and common land,
altering its size at will from that of a small dog to that of a bull, to frighten those
who might be passing. It appears that Irish emigrants carried both the mermaid [171]
and pookah abroad with them as early as the seventeenth century, at least to the
West Indies. In doing research among the "Black Irish" of Montserrat during
1965, 1966, and last year, I discovered a mermaid with white skin who guards a
pot of gold buried on top of Chance's Mountain, and a pookah in the form of a

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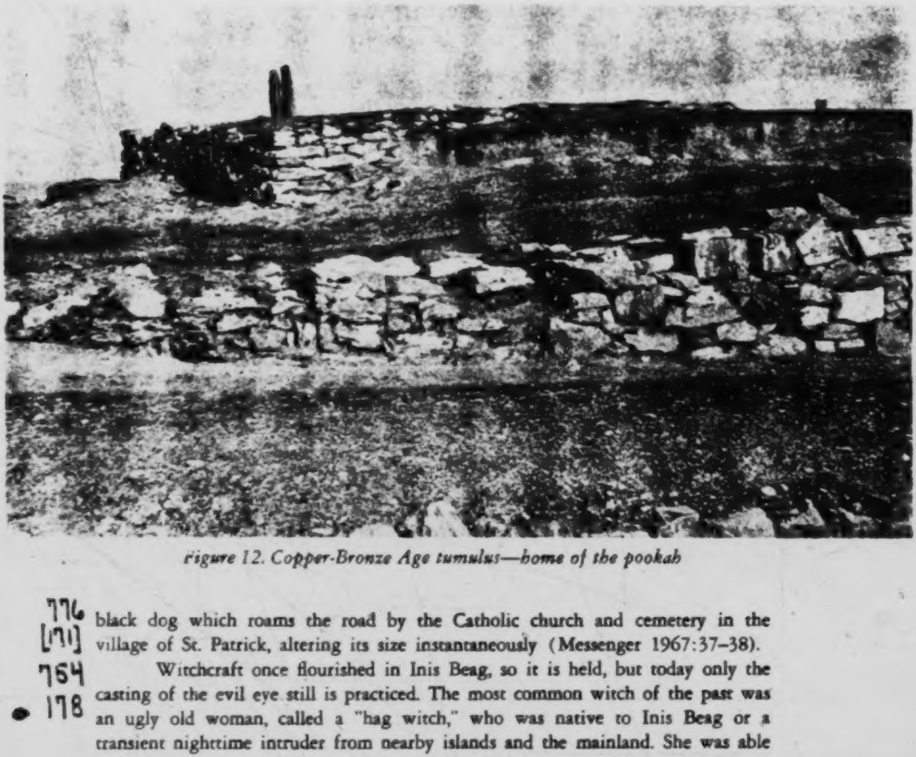

Figure 12. Copper-Bronze Age tumulus—home of the pookah

776 black dog which roams the road by the Catholic church and cemetery in the
[171] village of St. Patrick, altering its size instantaneously (Messenger 1967:37–38).
754 Witchcraft once flourished in Inis Beag, so it is held, but today only the
casting of the evil eye still is practiced. The most common witch of the past was
178 an ugly old woman, called a "hag witch," who was native to Inis Beag or a
transient nighttime intruder from nearby islands and the mainland. She was able
to fly through the air swiftly, make herself invisible, assume any size or shape, enter
the body of an animal, and perpetrate black magic. Her favorite animal familiar
was the rabbit and her favorite target the cow, whose milk she purloined after
754 midnight from beasts pastured at the back of the island. Like the trooping fairies,
753 she too stole the souls of children and left ailing changelings in their stead. When
755 it was suspected by parents that a child was a changeling rather than their human
855 offspring, it was customary to throw it into the fireplace or burn the bedding on
which it lay in order to retrieve the departed soul; if the perpetrator were a witch,
she would leap from the flames with a "wild shriek" and vanish, leaving the
restored child in perfect health in her place. I was told in Inis Thiar of islanders
there who bear scars from being burned when their souls were rescued by this
expediency.

754 Three Inis Beag persons are accused of possessing the evil eye and thus
[626] are shunned by their fellows. Such a witch is known by a disfigurement in or near
[576] his left eye, from which the malignant force emanates, and by his ability to cause

misfortune to those whom he compliments. The extent of his power is measured 754
by how soon after the compliment his victim suffers, and how serious is the [576]
calamity. Most feared of recent witches is a man who as a youth caused a newly 754
arrived curate on his first walk of the island to fall and break his leg; within seconds 756
after the boy praised the vigorous stride of the priest, "the poor creature disappeared
behind a fence, feet over head." The folk seldom compliment one another, [789]
and when they do they append "God bless you." to the statement as a precautionary
incantation. Persons with the evil eye neglect to do this, it is said. I often have
wondered—when in a mood to credit the existence of fairies which turn on water
faucets in the dead of night—if a series of misfortunes which befell me during
1960 and 1961 was somehow linked to one of these persons wishing me a good
year, without uttering "God bless you.", as my wife and I put off the strand
in a canoe at the end of our research. The same incantation is voiced by those [789]
in the vicinity of one who sneezes—in this case to prevent his soul from being [827]
captured by the fairies. It is tempting to attribute the unwillingness of Irish
peasants generally to pay compliments to the age-old but now forgotten dread of
being accused of the evil eye and of inviting fairies and hag witches to substitute
changelings for human children.

Priests of the church at least a century ago rid Inis Beag of most religious 787
practitioners of pagan disposition, but there is evidence that before their acculturative [793]
influence was felt diviners and workers of good and evil magic practiced [798]
techniques which had their roots in the Iron Age. Divining now is restricted mostly
to the seeking of omens by everyone, and the astrological and tea leaf reading skills [778]
of several persons who do not charge for their services. The principal workers of [789]
magic in the past were herbalists, animal doctors, and bone setters; an animal [174]
doctor in Inis Beag and a bone setter in a nearby island still ply their inherited
specialties for pay, but both men claim that they are practical folk physicians and 787
do not command pagan or Christian spiritual powers. Just as the islanders share 759
a common body of omens which are used to avoid the misfortunes and compound 184
the benefits in store for them, they also share a common knowledge of folk 755
medicines, which some believe to be more efficacious than the medicines provided
by doctor and nurse Indigenous medicines once were prescribed by workers of [759]
magic, misnamed "herb witches"—old women who gathered plants at dawn and
"brewed" them in a variety of ways to affect various cures. The dew on the plants,
as well as the manner in which they were compounded, gave these medicines a
magical potency. To meet such a witch as she was returning from collecting 753
ingredients meant that one was doomed to take on the affliction of the patient
being treated by the hag. A similar belief, well represented in the folklore of the
islanders, is the transference of disease from a human being to an animal that he
has befriended earlier.

Christian and Pagan Reinterpretations

The four quarterly festivals of the Celts were: Imbolc, celebrated on 175
February 1st, Beltaine on May 1st, Lughnasa on August 1st, and Samhain on 796
November 1st.

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796 November 1st. Imbolc heralded the coming of spring with the lactation of ewes,
while at Beltaine cattle were driven to open grazing after passing between bonfires
221 which magically protected them against disease and ensured their fertility.
The harvest commenced with Lughnasa, and the grazing season ended with
796 Samhain. Of these festivals, Imbolc has become reinterpreted with the feast of St.
178 Brigid; Beltaine and Samhain, known today as May Day and Allhallows respectively,
[771] have remained almost untouched by Christianity and are observed in
[114] Inis Beag; but Lughnasa has disappeared from island tradition. Lughnasa still is
celebrated in many parts of Ireland and is the subject of a monumental folklore
study—Maire MacNeill's *The Festival of Lughnasa*; until the introduction of
early potatoes into Inis Beag, harvesting commenced on this day, but any other
practices associated with Lughnasa were abandoned long ago. Minor pagan festivals
have become reinterpreted with Whitsuntide and the feasts of St. John, St.
Martin, and St. Stephen, all of which are observed in Inis Beag.

776 Brigid, the most renowned of Irish female saints, was a cowherd and
[824] therefore is associated with cattle and with flowers, such as the dandelion, which
nourish young lambs in the spring. On the last day of January, a small "Brigid's
776 Cross" is fashioned from straw in each household of Inis Beag, and is thrust into
778 the thatching at the end of the feast day. Crosses once were made from rushes,
[824] wood, metal, and even paper, and it is possible to determine the age of a thatched
[174] cottage being dismantled or renovated by counting the number of crosses salvaged
[175] from the straw debris. The Celts worshipped the sun whose symbol was the
swastika, and the Brigid's Cross takes this form. It is a charm which protects the
house (and the byre on the mainland) and those within it from harm, especially
735 by fire, during the year. At the beginning of this century, a destitute woman who
776 lived alone used to go from door to door begging for food and carrying a large
778 "Brigid's Doll" made of straw and dressed immaculately in white with a picture
of the saint on its breast. Some of the folk pulled straw from the doll to manufacture
[538] their crosses. After the woman recited the following poem, she was presented
[782] with food in honor of the saint, for which she blessed each person in the
household with the doll:

[539]

Here comes Brigid
Dressed in white.
Give her something
For the night.

She is deaf and
She is dumb.
For God's sake,
Give her some.

536
735 Today, small groups of girls travel about the island emulating their predecessor
431 by begging for coins to buy candy and donate to the church. A Brigid's Doll dressed
776 in confirmation garb is carried by the leader of each group, and is used to confer
778 blessings after the girls have recited in unison the two verses.

May Eve and Allhallows' Eve are both times when it is dangerous to go
796 out of doors alone at night or be abroad after midnight, for the "big fellow"
776 roams the back of the island, and everywhere pagan fairies, witches, vindictive
[822] ghosts, and the dog of the tumulus search for human victims. The safety of cattle
[778] is of particular concern to the folk on May Eve, and a common practice is to
[233] attach to the horn or tail of a cow a cloth containing a piece of iron which has

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796 origin, and the church honors St. Martin of Tours in the liturgy of November
11th. O Suilleabhain suggests that the Catholic feast has been reinterpreted with
• [178] a pagan festival, which had the sacrificial shedding of blood as one of its main
[782] facets. St. Martin also is associated with the grinding of corn and with miraculous
[252] powers for causing growth in plants and creating animals from inanimate matter.
796 In Inis Beag, the saint is regarded as a miller who was martyred in Ireland during
776 the Middle Ages by being cast under a mill wheel and ground to death. A few
798 islanders still observe the taboos of not turning wheels or spinning on the vigil
and feast day to honor his martyrdom. The Sunday before St. Martin's Day is
796 called "bloody Sunday," when those who can afford to do so butcher a sheep to be
776 consumed by the family on the feast day; others less fortunate kill a fowl or duck
782 during the vigil. Using the sacrificed animal's blood, the father or mother makes
[231] the sign of the cross on the forehead of each member of the family, while praying
[828] that the saint guard the safety of all in the year to follow. Some folk use the blood
[231] to bless in a like manner the fireplace, bedposts, front door, and outbuildings; all
crosses, including those on the forehead, are allowed to remain until obliterated
by natural causes.

796 Just as the girls of Inis Beag carry the Brigid's Doll and beg from door to
825 door on the feast day of the saint, the boys do the same with a wren attached to
417 a long wooden pole on the morning of St. Stephen's Day, the feast day following
53 Christmas. The "wrenboys" travel in pairs and are invited into each home, where
they are awarded coins for dancing and singing this song:

> Wren, wren, the king of the birds,
> St. Stephen's Day he was caught in the furze.
> So little I am, my family is great.
> Get up landlady and give us a break.
>
> Up with the kettle and down with the pan,
> And give us a shilling to carry the wren.
> If you haven't a shilling a ha'penny will do.
> If you haven't a ha'penny—God bless you.

Handkerchiefs, ribbons, and a sprig of holly also are attached to the pole, and in
1959 only one pair of youths managed to "hunt the wren" successfully and thus
maintain the tradition. A home is not blessed by these visitations, as in the case
of the groups of girls on St. Brigid's Day, but the act of giving money is believed
[184] to bring luck to the household. In some regions of the mainland, wrenboys wear
straw masks, animal skins, or horns, and carry the wren on a holly bush or decorated
wooden tray as they march in procession shouting and singing songs to the
accompaniment of homemade skin tambourines (Evans 1957:279). Little is known
of the pagan roots of the ceremony.

771 In addition to the reinterpretations associated with the holy well and with
776 Celtic festivals, there are many others of lesser significance of which only three
will be considered here: beliefs concerning ghosts, the evil eye, and the afterworld.
771 We have seen that most of the folk have had contact of some sort with the fairies;
775 they also have witnessed ghosts—called "shades"—in corporeal form in Inis Beag
or sailing the surrounding waters. These beings, who "aren't of this world," some-

times are recognized as recently deceased islanders, but more often they are 771
"strangers" from another generation or another region of Ireland. They appear 775
and disappear without warning and travel silently singly or in small groups.
Usually they pay little or no heed to the living who chance to observe them, but
they will attack those who have wronged them and occasionally others for seemingly
no reason. A man told me of being beaten severely by three unknown men,
obviously shades, early one evening at the back of the island; he might have been
killed but for the intervention of two women, also strangers to him. At one time,
persons who feared being assaulted by vengeful or capricious ghosts carried coals
to protect themselves. The folk believe that shades are souls of the dead in Purgatory,
which embraces the earth as well as a spiritual locus. While on earth, they do [783]
penance by laboring at economic tasks—carrying seaweed, planting gardens, and
fishing—near their former homes, and the work that they accomplish is undone
once they disappear.

Christianity touches on the evil eye in more ways than providing the 771
magical incantation, "God bless you.", which automatically opposes the power of 776
God to that of the witch. Many islanders explain the evil eye by positing the 754
presence of both the deity and the Devil in each human body. God rests on the 178
right side and urges a person to do good deeds, while Satan rests on the left and 826
tempts him to commit sins. In most individuals, the deity dominates the body
much of the time, but in the case of one with the evil eye, the Devil somehow
has gained perpetual ascendancy and transmits his destructive power through the
left eye of the person. It is the constant flowing of malignant power from within
which causes the disfigurement in or near the left eye of the witch. The association [822]
of evil with the left is a phenomenon widely distributed among the peoples of
the world, as is the linking of evil with black. Ghost masks are painted black to [171]
symbolize their evil nature by the Anang of Nigeria, and sacrifices to deity and
ancestors at shrines are made with the right hand, and to ghosts, witches, and the
spirit of sorcery with the left. In Inis Beag, people who have swarthy skin, black 826
hair, and brown eyes, although not considered witches, are thought to possess evil 828
power of some sort and are to be avoided. A curate possessing these physical traits 754
who served in the island recently was mistrusted and shunned whenever possible [793]
even though "a man chosen by God Almighty." An interesting conjecture is how
successful would be the research in Inis Beag of an anthropologist with dark
complexion and hair and a cast in his brown left eye.

The afterworld of the Celts, known as the Isle of the Blest or the Land of 775
Youth, lay to the west of Ireland. It has been sighted by a few fortunate Inis Beag 772
fishermen, either low-lying on the horizon with lights sparkling when it has risen
from the sea, as it does periodically, or in the ocean deeps with the spires of its
buildings and their tolling bells near the surface. This is a forested land inhabited
by souls of the dead, and by fairies who travel to and from the mainland in
"fairy ships." Few islanders now syncretize the Isle of the Blest with the Christian
Heaven, as was common a century ago, but there are those who claim to have seen
fairy ships from there skirt Inis Beag headed for the mainland. These are masted
schooners carrying lights with no signs of life on their decks, which heave into
sight and vanish instantaneously and can move far more swiftly than their counter-

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population in the presence of strangers, to conform to the nativistic and primitivistic [829]
stereotype. Probably the most robust of the two dozen islanders past the
age of 70 years believes that he will live to be 100 years old, because he continues [668]
to be active physically and doesn't "worry about the health;" he accuses his fellows [753]
of "worrying themselves into the grave" over matters of body and soul.

The etiology of mental illness as conceived by the islanders is varied and 828
embraces both natural and spiritual realms. "Insanity" stigmatizes the victim and [743]
his family, often for many generations, no matter what its cause, and as many
psychotics are treated at home—hidden from the probing eyes of strangers—as are
incarcerated in the mental institution serving the region of which Inis Beag is
a part. Statistics on mental disorders are hard to come by because of the opprobrium 164
attached to insanity, but at least eight of the folk were institutionalized for 743
various periods between 1940 and 1965. Only one of these is a woman and none
were violent prior to admission. Inheritance, inbreeding, and the menopause are 753
the natural causes most widely accepted by the islanders, but some claim that heavy
blows to the head, acute alcoholism, and even prolonged emotional tension—or
"nerves"—can induce insanity. In explaining why a former Inis Beag curate was
committed to a mental institution, an old man revealed what is probably the most
significant cause of mental illness in Ireland when he said that the constant association
of the priest with a pretty housekeeper "drove him mad from frustration;"
he advocated that only elderly, plain-appearing women (who will not "gab"
everything that they know to "our man") be hired for the task.

Supernatural forces are believed capable of causing not only mental illness,
but most other maladies and injuries as well. Pagan dispensers of ill health are [776]
vengeful or capricious fairies, ghosts, and witches of the evil eye, while Catholicism [787]
provides an unpredictable Devil, a deity who punishes sinful thoughts and deeds
in this world as well as in the next, and priests who in Inis Beag often have interpreted [178]
the boundaries of sin according to Irish and personal criteria. In the case
of certain folk stricken with mental disorders, I have heard specific causes put
forth to account for their condition: parents who are second cousins, the evil eye
of a neighbor, punishment by God for a particular misdeed, and a priest's curse.
A man who mistreated his aged bachelor uncle before his recent death now is
haunted with the specter of being struck down from the grave with sickness,
injury, or madness by the shade of the uncle seeking revenge. His despair and
erratic behavior arouse little sympathy from his fellows, who await the day of
reckoning. The stigma of mental illness arises from its designation as inheritable [829]
or a sign of the deity's displeasure, both of which may doom those of generations [827]
to come. There is a strong suspicion among the folk that other maladies which are [776]
deforming or leave physical aftereffects once cured can be transmitted through
inheritance. In this category are two mongoloids, one dwarf, one epileptic, one 753
person with goiter, one with a cleft palate, and one who has recovered from 732
poliomyelitis. These disabilities also can stigmatize a family. 827

Probably the most infamous custom associated with the Irish is their excessive 273
intake of intoxicating drink, and certainly Inis Beag islanders are no exception
to the stereotype. Men drink far more than women, but even though the latter [562]
widely condemn the practice many are known to send their children to the pubs

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[562] to procure stout and brandy (ostensibly a general purpose medicine in this case)
in disguised containers to be consumed at home. The drinking of the men takes
273 place, for the most part, in the pubs and at parties, and seldom is it indulged in to
275 the extent that the imbibers become physically incapacitated. There were no cases
[733] of alcoholism in Inis Beag during 1959, according to the nurse. Although drinking
[164] obviously is done to combat depression and boredom, dissolve feelings of shyness
and inferiority, alleviate the sense of sin and guilt, and overcome secretiveness
which limits extroversion, the folk defend the practice by claiming that it makes
them more articulate and convivial and thus better able to sing, dance, converse
with one another, and tell stories. The often used phrases "to give us courage" and
273 "great gas" connote just these benefits. In Ireland today, there are nearly half-a-
575 million members of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Society—founded in that country
125 years ago—who have "taken the pledge" not to drink spirits in any form; they
wear a small badge shaped like a shield which bears the emblem of the Sacred Heart.
Twelve "Pioneers" in Inis Beag have taken a lifetime pledge and about 30 others
[561] a two year pledge not to imbibe. Most of these persons are old men, women, and
[626] boys. Young and middle-aged men who are members of the society are the objects
of a good deal of indirect ridicule and direct jesting.

Folklore

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178 As a result of acculturation, the Inis Beag esthetic tradition today is not
53 nearly so rich as it was two generations ago, nor has it ever been as rich as those
found in many other peasant areas of Ireland. The principal esthetic forms are
folklore, music, and dance; lacking are the graphic and plastic arts, and of the
crafts already considered only the knitting of ganzies, the crocheting of shawls,
and *crios* making transcend sheer utility in their manufacture, according to the
538 evaluation of island artisans. Myths, legends, folktales, and anecdotes among prose
narratives, and song texts and proverbs, are the predominant genres of oral literature.
There is no drama, while poetry, riddles, and jokes seldom are recited.

114 "Along the western shores of Ireland and Scotland . . . is preserved the
171 oldest vernacular literature in Europe, north and west of the Alps. Along this
538 tattered cultural frontier . . . [are] the last remnants of the most venerable body of
178 orally preserved tradition in western Europe" (Delargy 1957:178). The Inis Beag
124 folk share this body of folklore, and storytelling always has loomed large in the
lives of the people. However, it had disappeared formally from the island by the
time that my wife and I came, and we were never able to attend a traditional
storytelling session, but had to reconstruct its institutionalized characteristics by
538 plumbing the memory of one of the two aged narrators still alive. There are two
types of Irish storytellers: the *scéalaí*, who recounts myths and legends of the
mythological, Ulster, Fenian, and historical cycles, as well as ancient folktales; and
the *seanchaí*, "who makes a specialty of local tales, family-sagas, or genealogies,
social-historical tradition, and the like, and can recount many tales of a short
realistic type about fairies, ghosts, and other supernatural beings (Delargy 1945:6).
[562] In Inis Beag, the former type of storyteller was always male and the latter usually

538 or Sean O'Sullivan's recent *Folktales of Ireland*. But a further word must be said
539 of the tales recited by the *seanchai*. Popular among local legends are those dealing
with such topics as the famine, evictions and other excesses of past landlords, visits
to the island by the Black and Tans seeking political refugees, shipwrecks, and
tragedies at sea among fishermen. Stories of the supernatural center around the
actions of fairies, the pookah and banshee, those with the evil eye, phantom ships,
mermaids and sea demons, and material objects possessing human attributes and
538 volitions. These local legends sometimes qualify as anecdotes, and it is humorous
522 anecdotes which the folk refer to as jokes. Outsiders—such as returned Yanks—
[177] are responsible for introducing true jokes, but often these are not told and soon
are forgotten, especially if they are "dirty jokes." There is no indigenous dirty
joking tradition because of sexual puritanism. I have heard men use various verbal
devices—innuendos, puns, and asides—that they believed bear sexual connotations;
[123] relatively speaking, they are pallid. In the song that I composed, one line of a
[832] verse refers to an islander who arose late on the morning of the shipwreck after
"dreaming perhaps of a beautiful mate;" this is regarded as a highly suggestive
phrase, and I have seen it redden cheeks and lower glances in a pub.

538 Storytelling in the past took place mostly between the last week of October
[221] and early January, when inclement weather forced a slackening of the fishing
[178] regime, and the Christmas season kept people in and near their homes. Nowadays,
[524] card playing almost nightly during November and part of December by many of
the men has become a substitute activity, which excludes the participation of
[561] women and children who once composed a part of the audience addressed by the
[562] storyteller. At any one time during this period, several groups met to hear Inis
538 Beag narrators; a *scéalaí* or *seanchai* might be visited by a group and serve as host,
573 or he might be invited into or visit on his own another household, and word of
his presence would quickly draw an audience. The session lasted from eight or
nine o'clock until midnight, and a tale might be so long that its telling occupied an
entire evening, or even two or three consecutive nights. After completing a brief
narrative, the storyteller might call on a colleague in the audience to recite a sequel,
or the hearers might request that he continue or urge another to contribute a tale.

[857] The average sized audience was composed of a dozen persons, although
as many as 20 might attend a session. Small children seldom were allowed in the
[562] room unless they were members of the family of the host, nor were women of
another household; the children were admonished to sit quietly and not to talk or
whisper, and the women knitted or crocheted while listening. Seated in a semicircle
around the hearth, the hearers were faced by the narrator who was seated
[574] on the right side of the fireplace, and the wife of the host on the left. Refreshments
never were served, but a clay pipe was passed around among the men and very
old women. The host furnished pipe and tobacco, and the pipe was passed back to
him by each person in turn after being puffed on for several minutes. Only if the
story was a long one was the pipe proffered by the host to the narrator from time
to time.

538 Most storytellers were men past the age of 60 years, but some were
561 between 40 and 60 and a few even younger. An old narrator of reputation often
[868] called on a young man to recite in order to give him practice, if he felt that the

538 539 191 add color and give point: to guide, to encourage, to praise, to admonish, to reprove, [537] and to implement the art of "indirection" so dear to the Irish. Many are subtle and cannot be understood unless the history and culture of Inis Beag and Ireland 538 are known to the listener. Such a one is, "Come raise the bag on me." This proverb 539 derives from the days of the famine, when maize (corn) was distributed to the poor and hungry; an old woman on the mainland nearby with eight mouths to feed was given a one pound sack, and she asked an official to help her with the "great load." Now it is employed whenever someone receives less than he anticipated. Both tales and proverbs serve enculturative ends by providing models of proper behavior to infants and children. Riddles, told only by the very young, also function in this manner—to sharpen the wits.

Music, Song, and Dance

533 535 Many times I have heard it said on the mainland that the folk of Inis Beag [126] were in the past, and still are, "poor" musicians, singers, and dancers. It is claimed that once there were competent "fiddlers," pipers, tin whistle and flute players, and accordion, concertina, and melodeon players in the island, but during the months that my wife and I lived there, our portable phonograph and two dozen records—along with the accordions of several inexpert musicians, mostly young men trying to master the instrument—provided most of the music for dancing. Music also is produced by lilting, which is known as "mouth music" or "*pus* music" (*pus* being a Gaelic word for mouth). I have witnessed only one man lilt to accompany step dancing, and he for never more than three minutes without pause because of his advanced age; at 73 years, he can lilt while dancing a brief jig himself.

53 The violin is played holding its base in the crook of the elbow, while the forearm is supported on the thigh of the seated musician. The sole fiddler in 1960 was the *seanchai*, and he could step dance, sing, and recite poetry as well with a 533 high order of excellence for a man of 72 years. Much more difficult to play than 534 its mouth blown counterpart of Scottish fame, the Irish Uilleann bagpipe is played while seated, and its windbag inflated by a bellow manipulated by movements of the upper arm. Since its drone pipes do not dominate the chanter, or melody pipe, the music produced with this bagpipe is more tuneful than that of the Highland instrument: as one islander put it, "The Scottish pipes make you want to charge [178] into battle, while ours make you want to leap up and dance." Today, the only [874] pipe music heard in Inis Beag is played during the summer, when occasionally a mainland piper is hired to furnish music to dance to for children attending summer language school. Tin whistle players usually perform on the flute also, since the former instrument is a smaller, vertically played cousin of the latter, somewhat [184] resembling the recorder. It is extremely common on the mainland, but no longer [178] played in Inis Beag except infrequently by visitors. Although the accordion and related wind instruments have achieved a new popularity owing to the vogue of [177] the "*céili* band," in which they assume a commanding position, they were played widely in the island during the last century after being introduced by lighthouse

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and coast guard personnel. Only four tunes are played by Inis Beag accordionists 177
to accompany dancing. 178

Instrumentalists, lilters, and singers traditionally performed individually; 533
music was played by a fiddler or flutist and sung by a lilter only to serve solo and 534
figure dancers, and a singer never was joined by others in chorus or accompanied 536
by an instrument. But now the dancers, young and old alike, choose to dance to the
lively jigs and reels of the *céili* band, which plays modern Irish "country dance 535
music." My wife and I discovered that the folk preferred our *céili* band records for [123]
dancing, and were reticent about performing to the music of our many records of
fiddling, piping, and flute and tin whistle playing of exceptional quality. On several [177]
occasions, we played jazz and classical recordings to groups assembled in our home,
to which the islanders listened politely but indifferently. Our *céili* band records
seemed to be quite as acceptable as an accordion at dances and in the pub, and I
frequently shared equally with an instrumentalist the time spent in furnishing
music for a night long party.

Of the Irish song tradition, Donal O'Sullivan writes: "There is, indeed, a 114
consensus of informed opinion as to its exceeding beauty. . . . In sheer abundance, 533
also, it is probably not surpassed by that of any nation of comparable area and
population: for this small and thinly inhabited island has yielded . . . many thousands
of melodies of unusual diversity—all of them the anonymous product of
the people . . ." (O'Sullivan 1961:5). The Inis Beag folk, as in the case of their 533
music, share but a small portion of this vast body of song. Only a few songs sung 184
publicly by less than a dozen islanders are in Irish, and these are predominantly
local compositions. Most of the songs have texts in English and are common to [538]
the mainland as well, and of these but a handful are true folk songs—"anonymous
product of the people"—rather than broadsides (printed, sold, and memorized)
of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Tunes and songs, just as tale types and [171]
motifs, of the Irish often are shared with British and Continental neighbors, and
it is hard to know their points of origin and paths of diffusion. Some islanders [173]
believe that a few of their songs—such as "The Pretty Maid Milking Her Cow"—
were obtained by overhearing the fairies at play. Only one composer is active in 533
the vicinity of Inis Beag at the present time; he is a young man from Inis Thiar
who excels at composing songs in Irish based on recent events of importance in
and near the two islands. A song of his, which describes the incidents arising out [539]
of the grounding of the steamer on a sand bar off Inis Thiar several years ago,
is one of the most sung ballads in the region.

Singing is a popular pastime in Inis Beag, particularly among men in the
pubs, and several islanders of both sexes have outstanding voices by Irish standards.
I tape recorded only 38 songs (13 in Gaelic) and found their major themes [126]
to be sentimental, patriotic, and humorous—stressing death, unrequited love, [539]
emigration and the parting of relatives and friends, conflict in various forms with
the English, and lives of the political "martyrs." Love songs, lullabies, humorous 533
songs, religious songs, laments, drinking songs, and songs of occupation (such as 184
ploughing, milking, and spinning) are the major indigenous Irish folk song
categories (O'Sullivan 1961:39), but some are absent and others are underrepresented
in Inis Beag. Also absent are carols, as well as boat songs like those of
the Gaelic speaking Scottish fishermen.

533 the Gaelic speaking Scottish fishermen. Only a few tunes accommodate the songs
[539] sung in the island, and the text is far more important to listeners than the ability of a singer to carry the melody. Much admired is the person who can sing a long ballad without pausing or making a mistake, and each episode of the song is listened to attentively, while an occasional, "God be with you.", "Good man.", or "That's it." from the audience urges the singer on or rewards his efforts.

123 The records of songs that my wife and I brought to Inis Beag with us fea-
533 ture performers who sing in both Gaelic and English, and the latter were favored
177 by the islanders. Contrary to our expectations, they disliked our Gael Linn records
[186] from Dublin, because they could not understand the Irish of the singers; nor did they care for a commercial record cut in a nearby island, for the ethnocentric reason that the singers there are thought to be inferior to their own. We soon had to learn folk songs, as we often were "called out" to sing, but our American songs although admired as to melody, did not arouse the interest of our listeners as to text. "The Cowboy's Lament," once learned, came to be "my song" and was always requested at parties; it is now sung by others in my absence, but never when I am
[831] in the island. Just as this song appeals to the masochism of the folk, my wife's singing of "The Lavender Cowboy"—"who had only two hairs on his chest"—in a pub aroused their sexual puritanism, and was never sung again after its introduction because of the embarrassed response of the men. Since we ordered many Irish folksong books in order to learn texts, island singers borrowed them to commit to memory additional texts themselves, and they also requested that we give them texts of "cowboy songs" taken from records.

123 My ballad was prompted by the absence of an indigenous composer, some
533 impromptu rhyming that I had done in the pubs, an eye witness account of the rescue (written by my wife but dictated by me, according to local opinion) which appeared in a Dublin newspaper, and was urged on me by my respondents. I chose the air of the popular broadside song, "Brian O'Linn," and copied the lyric style of its composer, and based as many verses as possible on the more prevalent rumors which arose in the months following the shipwreck. Copying the folklore idiom as accurately as I could, I also employed many Irish terms—especially place-names—and eschewed Yank expressions while incorporating local ones at every
[177] opportunity. In time, island balladiers came to substitute words and phrases, and even stanzas, as they molded the song more closely to their tongue and milieu. Some lines came to be used as proverbs and others to stimulate a variety of conversational responses.

535 Little is known of the history of Irish dancing. The earliest references to
175 round and long dances are from the sixteenth century, and they appear to be older than the single, or "step," dances. The step and figure dances of today were created by the dancing masters of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (O'Keeffe and O'Brien 1912:13–27). Step dancing preceded figure dancing in Inis Beag, although there is a difference of opinion among elders as to whether or
535 not the coast guard families introduced figure dancing a hundred years ago. Young
178 adults no longer step dance, although since 1960 children have been stimulated
[874] to learn the skill through instruction in the school and by watching and participating in the dances of the students attending summer language school; so this may

rejuvenate the moribund tradition. However, several men past the age of 40 years 535 178
still are able to perform jigs, reels, hornpipes, and hop-jigs with dexterity, "when [874]
the humor is on them," and are called out at parties and in the pubs; a few women
will step dance in their homes or at small social gatherings.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that the rigid body and arms of 535
the step dancer are an early nineteenth century product of Jansenist doctrine in [175]
the church, which attempted to desexualize dancing. Most of the movement is [177]
below the hips of the dancer, and it is the feet of the performer which are watched [179]
intently by the audience, at least openly. Inis Beag men move their upper bodies [184]
and arms more than is customary on the mainland, and they are not as graceful
as other Irish dancers.

Figure dancing is called "set" dancing in Ireland, and there are many such
dances, each of which combines a number of simple and complex figures performed
by the couples. There is only one set in Inis Beag; it bears no name and is danced
by one or more groups of four couples each. The many figures of the dance are
simple, and it takes about 20 minutes to complete. I have heard young dancers [874]
complain at the end of a night of the tediousness of the single set, and some of
them are learning other Irish figures at language school dances—"The Walls of
Limerick" and "The Bridge of Athlone," among others. The most enjoyed movement of the local set is the one at the end in which the man holds his partner closely and twirls her almost violently, sometimes for longer than is prescribed so that the musician must pause or alter his rhythm. With bodily contact between partners otherwise so limited, perhaps this figure allows the expression of repressed sexuality.

Parties

It is appropriate to describe the Inis Beag party and a festive night at the 574
pub in this chapter, because they are esthetic as well as social events, in which are 63
combined storytelling, music, song, and dance. Parties are very much the same,
whether held in the winter or the summer or to welcome home a long departed
emigrant or to "drag home" a new bride. Only two rooms of the house are utilized 574
—the kitchen and "the room" adjoining it—and benches are placed along the walls 342
to supplement the chairs and bed on which guests will sit. The barrel or two of 343
stout to be served is placed in the back hall off the kitchen, if there is such a hall, 352
or in a back corner of the kitchen, and one man is assigned the task of dispensing 574
the drink and remaining at his post throughout the night. Another man acts as 273
"pourer" and fills a bucket from which he pours the stout into several mugs and
glasses which are circulated from man to man. A bottle of whiskey is opened and [888]
proffered only to the old men, who often sit in a group beside the fireplace and ex-
change anecdotes and tales. On a table in "the room" are placed bottles of wine and [272]
soft drinks to accommodate the women and non-drinkers among the men before [343]
and after refreshments are served. Sometimes an elderly woman will drink surrep-
titiously of the whiskey or stout, and it is customary for the musicians and those [562]
who sing and step dance the most to be awarded extra amounts of stout. Women

574
273 Women
[562] tend to drink very little at parties, in part because of the embarrassment caused
[514] them by visiting the outside toilet with men looking on.

574 The party commences with several sets danced in quick succession. There
571 is room for only one dance group initially because of the small size of the kitchen
[535] and the large number of guests filling the house. It is difficult to move about the
two rooms with the press of bodies, and the crowd within is matched by the
[562] cluster of men around the front door awaiting their turn to dance. Unmarried
women tend to sit and stand on one side of the kitchen and men on the other,
[857] while married people congregate in the other room. Children in their best dress
sit quietly together and watch the festivities tirelessly until the guests depart.
574 Crowding at the party necessitates that men and women will be pressed together
834 both as dancers and viewers, and that persons will sit on one anothers' laps, including
women on the laps of men occasionally. The islanders strain to display indifference,
as they do in watching a full-bodied woman step dance, at least until the
574 intake of alcohol causes a few to betray their emotions.

533 Usually two or even three accordionists (and the visiting anthropologist
[123] with his phonograph) are invited to attend, and they spell one another. After an
hour or so of dancing, singers and step dancers perform between the sets while
574 stout is poured; they may be called out by the urging of the guests, or by the host or
273 one of his choosing who acts as a master of ceremonies and directs all of the
[533] activities of the party. Stout may be distributed during the sets, but most hosts
[535] prefer that it be done during pauses, so that less is spilled by the dancing and
milling crowd. The pourer with his bucket follows the movement of the mugs and
glasses as they are passed about, and each man on having his container filled drains
it quickly and surrenders it to another nearby. Most of the young men visit the
pubs before the party and may do so again once or twice before the pubs close.

574 Midway during the night, the table of "the room" is set, and refreshments
264 are served to all of the guests in shifts. First the women are served, then the children,
[576] followed by the young men who do not drink stout, and finally the other
men. Both in viewing the proceedings from benches and in eating, the children
are separated as to sex. The menu resembles that of the usual Inis Beag meal and
includes tea, bread spread with butter and jam, cakes, and sometimes hard candy.
[356] Between the many sittings, the dishes and utensils are washed in a bucket and the
574 table reset. Dancing continues in the kitchen during this period, and after everyone
535 is served the table is moved to a corner and a second set is formed. The
remainder of the night is spent in dancing, but the pauses which punctuate the
sets become longer and the songs and step dances by guests more frequent as
dawn approaches.

574 My wife and I sponsored a Christmas party in 1959 in the home of an
579 islander and invited the entire population of Inis Beag. Two hours after midnight,
123 when I was absent briefly escorting an old man to his cottage, a fight broke out
[577] between two family factions which sent all of the guests scurrying home. The
following day, everyone whom we met commiserated with us "for the shame
of it," and we were told of many other parties in the past which had ended in the
574 same manner, so that we would not think our affair a failure. In recent years,
579 "rowdyism" on the part of youths who have "taken too much" has increased at
178
[738]

574 579

parties, so that many islanders will not give them for fear of possible damage to 178
houses and outbuildings. The reason why one man is assigned to the barrel of [738]
stout and a "firm" master of ceremonies is favored is to curb drunkenness and [278]
factional fighting. Small parties are coming to replace the large ones of the past, [738]
with invitations tendered secretly and at the last moment to avoid attracting
"hooligans." The format, however, has remained the same.

Pubs

Both pubs in Inis Beag do a thriving business. There are some folk who 275
purchase all of their provisions, drinks, and tobacco in only one of the pubs, others 443
who buy most of them in one but occasionally do business in the second, and still
others who scrupulously balance their buying between the two. The first group is 571
composed of near kin of the publicans, and the second of those who are economically [602]
beholden to the king and utilize his pub mostly, or who dislike him and
give the lion's share of their business to the other. This pattern is broken only
when one of the pubs is out of a commodity which the other has in stock, one
of them is closed for whatever reason, a "big night" is taking place at one of them,
or a dispute interferes. During the day, provisions are purchased in the shop—by [562]
children, women, and sometimes men; the women and children make their visits
as brief as possible, but the men are likely to stay for at least one "pint" of stout
and a "smoke." Other visitors in the daytime are chronic drinkers, men who are
working nearby and use the pub for a break, and men reciprocating for economic
services rendered. The pub is the province of the adult males at night, and the 275
only women who enter are the teachers, visiting emigrants, and tourists. Seldom [562]
is step dancing done unless outsiders are present, and when women are in the [535]
audience they will be called out to form a set or to dance solo or be paired with
an islander. Some nights only two or three of the folk will put in an appearance
at the pub, but on other nights as many as 20 persons will crowd into the narrow
room, while others in the hallway and outside wait to take their turn inside.
Another half-dozen men may sit in the snug drinking and talking together privately. [521]

Men come to the pub after dark usually in groups of two, three, or four. 275
Reciprocity dictates the drinking procedure, with each man in a group taking his 273
turn at "standing a round" for as long as the evening lasts. Men who do not like to 573
drink much or have little money will come to the pub singly or with another in 576
like circumstances, so that they will not become victims of the custom of reciprocation.
My first experience with this custom—in 1958 in a neighboring island— [123]
almost ended in tragedy for me, as I was with six men who insisted on drinking
"glasses" of whiskey; only my deep commitment to research and a heavy meal a
short time before prevented a "third round knockout." The first hour after the 275
men arrive in the pub is a quiet one, as they sit in silence or whisper to one 273
another while drinking pints in rapid succession. As their shyness gradually is 576
overcome by alcohol, they become more talkative and speak in louder tones to a 571
wider circle of their fellows. At least two hours must pass before individuals have [157]
"courage" enough to tell stories to all assembled or to sing. The best singers will be

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women in the island and are attracted by what they consider to be a more rewarding 168
life on the mainland and abroad, and so emigrate for these reasons. One of the 581
most "pitied" girls in the island is a returned emigrant to the United States, who,
despite being 24 years of age and suitable for marriage in every way, is not being
courted, although it is known that she came back to Inis Beag to obtain a husband.

All of the conditions making for personality depression—the intrusion of 167
priests into secular affairs, hypochondria, malicious gossiping, poverty, boredom, [157]
and isolation—also instigate emigration. My analysis assigns the secular excesses [626]
of the clergy and their implementation of the Jansenist doctrines of the Catholic [771]
Church in Ireland as the primary push factors in emigration and supports the 167
contention made by Paul Blanshard that, "When all the reasons for a flight from 128
Ireland have been mentioned, there still remains a suspicion that Irish young 771
people are leaving their nation largely because it is a poor place in which to be 793
happy and free. Have the priests created a civilization in which the chief values
of youth and love are subordinate to Catholic discipline?" (Blanshard 1954:154).
What "remains a suspicion" to Blanshard as regards all of Ireland is very much a
reality in Inis Beag.

Other internal factors accounting for emigration which are considered 167
important by the folk are the deadening of initiative by government services and 168
subsidies and the institutionalization of emigration itself. While many islanders 657
believe that the government ought to support even further the local economy in 828
order to combat emigration, others feel that its present level of benevolence has 829
had a deleterious effect on their character. Young people observing the indolence
of their elders, according to this opinion, are shamed into seeking a more active
life away from Inis Beag. In my estimation, this is a superficial cause, but the 167
institutionalization of emigration is a vital factor, more recognized by youth than [121]
by their parents. Just as in the case of late marriage, emigration since famine times
gradually has become an expectation—a "way of life"—and it will stimulate some
folk to leave even though, in the estimation of their fellows, it might be advantageous
for them to remain. When a young man says that he has an "itch to go
to England and work for a spell," he usually is being motivated in this manner.

Among the external causes of emigration, the most significant are the 167
growth of prosperity on the mainland and abroad, the influence of ever increasing 177
numbers of tourists who visit and returned emigrants who come for short stays [871]
or to retire in Inis Beag, the impact of the mass media of communication, and the
increasing availability of scholarship funds for children to attend secondary schools
on the mainland. The United States has been a land of freedom, opportunity, and 175
prosperity to the Irish since the early seventeenth century, but particularly during 167
and after the famine (Approximately 1,000,000 Irish emigrated between 1846 [829]
and 1851, and another 1,500,000 perished from hunger, according to Woodham-Smith
1962:411.). The first record of substantial emigration from Inis Beag is in
1822, and from that time until the Second World War most islanders migrated
to the United States, never to return. However, with the growth of prosperity in 167
England after 1946, the stream of emigration shifted in that direction. Not only 178
did jobs become plentiful across the Irish Sea then, but large, viable ethnic communities
served by Irish clergy had sprung up in the larger cities. It became possi-

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178 ble to visit Inis Beag frequently, as the cost and distance are slight compared to a
journey across the Atlantic.

The many vacationing emigrants who now return to the island at Christmas or Easter or during the summer months often succeed in persuading relatives and acquaintances to return to England with them. Those so persuaded declare that they will return soon with their "fortunes" to settle permanently, but they seldom do once "emancipated." Since the Second World War, several Americans have returned home, and their stories of life in the United States make the youth restive. Tourists who remain for weeks and months in Inis Beag and come to know many islanders also sow the seeds of discontent. A favorite subject of talk in the pubs is the relative advantages to be gained from migrating to particular cities in England and America, and anthropologists as well as returned emigrants are called on as consultants in this matter by youths.

167 Almost every cottage in Inis Beag has a radio, or "wireless," and although
204 the folk seldom read books, a wide assortment of domestic and foreign magazines
207 and newspapers find their way into most homes. These mass media also are an
emancipating force making for restiveness and discontent, because they allow
islanders a glimpse behind the "lace curtain" at what appears to be a happier and
177 freer world. Television was introduced into Inis Beag in 1963 at the lighthouse,
207 and a second set was procured for the new "dance hall" when it was completed
two years later. Few islanders venture to the lighthouse to view television, but I am told by correspondents that many now visit the hall during the several evening hours when transmission from Telefis Eireann takes place. As a result, television has become an acculturative medium to be reckoned with. Both radio and television programs are censored in Ireland, but even so the morality expressed in them—especially in the sex and violence drenched American ones—presents a striking contrast to locally conceived moral precepts. A hypothetical censor from Inis Beag most certainly would create more discontinuities with his shears in television performances than would his much maligned "secularized" colleagues in Dublin. My wife and I found that viewing television with islanders at the lighthouse on two occasions was a traumatic experience; it gave us a different (and even more disquieting) perspective on programs in the United States and their enculturative effects than can be obtained at home.

167 Since the Second World War, 28 island youths have pursued secondary
873 education elsewhere in Ireland, either in high schools, called "colleges," or in
technical schools, and most have been supported by government scholarships. The
usual high school scholarship is for 5 years, and a student must be 14 years of age
and qualify by competitive examination to receive one. Only 4 of these 28 students
873 —of which 2 are teachers in the national school—have returned to Inis Beag. One
[562] young man watched 2 girls, either of whom he eventually might have married, go
off to the mainland for school and said, "Scholarships are killing the island;" what
he was referring to, other than his own disappointment, is the fact that 19 of the
28 students who left for advanced education are girls. The reason for the dispro-
portionate number of girls receiving scholarships is that they are far more moti-
[829] vated academically and have better scholastic records than boys. There is, however,
a widespread belief in the island that certain families are favored by priests and

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JOHN C. MESSENGER*

SEX AND REPRESSION IN AN IRISH FOLK COMMUNITY

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121 In this chapter I will discuss sexual repression—its mani-
[101] festations in behavior and beliefs, its causes, its inculcation,
and its broader historical and cultural implications—in a small island community of the Gaeltacht that I will call Inis Beag.[1] My wife and I conducted ethnographic research there for nineteen months, between 1958 and 1966, which included a one-year stay and eight other visits of from one to seven weeks—at Christmas or during the summer. Ours is the only holistic ethnographic study of this community, although archeologists, linguists, philologists, folklorists, geographers, anthropometricians, and other scientists have undertaken research there for over a century. We collected a large body of culture and personality data on three other Irish islands for the purposes of making comparisons and testing hypotheses concerning culture and personality concomitants of
181 island living. Inis Beag is ideally suited to ethnographic and folklore
177 research in that its population possesses a tradition which is less accul-
178 turated than that of any other local Irish group.

[121] According to anthropological definition (Lewis 1960: 1–2), the
[105] islanders qualify as folk people in almost every respect. The community
178 has maintained its stability for at least 200 years; there is a strong bond
1 between the peasants and their land, and agriculture provides them with

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[122] * A grant from the Indiana University Ford International Program enabled me to write this chapter.

[1] For other reports on Inis Beag, consult Messenger 1962, 1968, and 1969.

the major source of their livelihood; production is mainly for subsistence 105
and is carried on with a simple technology, using the digging stick, spade, 178 •
and scythe as primary implements; the island folk participate in a money 181
economy, but barter still persists; a low standard of living prevails, and [177]
the birth rate is high; the family is of central importance, and marriage
figures prominently as a provision of economic welfare; the island is integrated
into the county and national governments and is subject to their
laws; the people have long been exposed to urban influences and have
borrowed cultural forms from other rural areas on the mainland, integrating
them into a relatively stable system; and, finally, the experience
of living under English rule for centuries has created in the islanders
an attitude of dependence on—yet hostility toward—government which
continues to this day. The only conditions in Inis Beag which run counter [184]
to those found in most other peasant communities are low death and [165]
illiteracy rates and bilateral, rather than unilineal, descent (although inheritance [212]
is patrilineal). [611]

Inis Beag culture also characterizes people of nearby islands, and 184
the traditions of the several together might be regarded as forming a
subculture of the total Irish system. Many island customs are shared [171]
with rural peasants on the mainland (where numerous regional subcultures
exist), and some are part of a broader European matrix. The 178
island has experienced considerable cultural change since the establishment [657]
of the Congested Districts Board (forerunner of the Gaeltacht) [177]
in 1891 and the growth of tourism in this century. But conditions
there still approximate those which must have prevailed two generations
ago, and earlier, throughout this region of peasant Ireland.

Inis Beag has a population of approximately 350 persons living in 161
seventy-one "cottages" distributed among four settlements, called "villages." 361
Bordering a "strand" and a large tract of common land on the 133
northeastern side of the island are a series of limestone terraces, separated 311,
by water-bearing shales and faced by small cliffs, on which the
villages are situated. Most of the arable land is found on this side, 134
where the shales have been broken down by weathering and alien soils
deposited by wind and by ice of the Weichsel glacier. Over many 241
generations, the islanders have deepened these soils and created new
soils on rock surfaces by adding seaweed, sand, and human manure.
On the southwestern side of Inis Beag, known as the "back of the 133
island," limestone pavements slope rather evenly, almost as the gentle
dip of the strata, from the crest of the highest terrace to the sea a
mile away. The bared surfaces are intersected in all directions by crevices, [137]

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[137] which contain a large portion of the natural flora—herbs and shrubs—
[361] of the island. Stone fences delimit many hundreds of plots which com-
[417] pose most of the two-square-mile land surface of Inis Beag.

105 The island boasts a post office with radio-telephone facilities, a
[205] "national school" in which three teachers instruct ninety pupils in the
[206] seven "standards," two provision shops with attached "pubs," a former
[371] coast guard station now housing the nurse and a knitting industry which
[759] employs local girls, a lighthouse, and a chapel served by a curate who
[288] resides nearby. Inis Beag lacks electricity and running water, and the
[464] only vehicles are several ass-drawn carts which are able to travel the
[502] narrow, fence-bordered trails. A small "steamer" carrying supplies,
[793] passengers, and mail to and from a mainland port visits the island
at least once each week. That Inis Beag has experienced far less
177 cultural change than other island communities of Ireland is largely due
178 to the fact that, in absence of a deep water quay, the steamer has
505 had to stand off the strand and be met by "canoes." Most of the
[131] tourists who come to the island stay only for the hours that the steamer
is anchored and go ashore mainly for the thrill of riding in the canoes,
which the island men row with consummate skill. Insofar as I can dis-
[484] cover, the inhabitants of Inis Beag are less prone to visit the mainland
than are the peoples of other Irish islands.

INIS BEAG
HISTORY AND CULTURE[2]

17 The prehistory and history of Inis Beag are recorded dramatically in
[211] a multitude of monuments and artifacts of stone and metal, including
Neolithic axe-heads and kitchen middens, Copper-Bronze Age gallery grave tombs and burial mounds of earth and stone, an Iron Age promontory fort, and medieval Christian monasteries, churches, cemeteries, stone houses, and a sacred well, as well as a three-story tower house built by the political overlords of the island. Irish nativists claim that the contemporary folk are lineal descendants of ancient, once civilized

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[101] [2] The culture described herein is that of 1959–1960 and excludes important
[121] changes which have occurred since then, such as those resulting from the intro-
duction of television, a summer language school for pupils from the mainland, and free secondary education.

Celts. But local legend, historical evidence, and genealogical data col- 17
lected by my wife and me indicate that the present population is de-
scended from immigrants who came to the island from many parts of
Ireland following the Cromwellian incursion of the seventeenth cen-
tury. The islanders still express bitterness over conditions of poverty and [829]
servitude experienced by their ancestors during the 300 years that they
lived under absentee Anglo-Irish landlords. All of the excesses of foreign [648]
domination suffered by mainland peasants were suffered by the inhabi- [511]
tants of Inis Beag, but were aggravated by the ordinary hardships of
island living. Little was known about events in Inis Beag during the [114]
eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries until the island was visited by
archeologists and publicized in their scientific writings. The surrounding [438]
area of the mainland was very much isolated and seldom visited at that [628]
time, although trading between Inis Beag and nearby communities was
carried on, and passing ships sometimes called at the island.

Agricultural pursuits have always dominated the subsistence econ- 433 [423]
omy of Inis Beag. Most householders own land on which they grow [244]
potatoes and other vegetables, grass, and sometimes rye and sally rods [246]
and where they pasture cattle, sheep, goats, asses, and horses. The [231] [311]
back of the island, behind the communities, is divided into four strips, [423]
and each landowner possesses numerous plots located along the "quarter"
on which his village fronts. The average combined holding is sixteen
acres, and almost 50 percent of the land is composed of arable indig-
enous and manufactured soils. Potatoes are the staple crop, and they [244]
are supplemented by various other vegetables, milk from cattle and goats, [262]
meat from island sheep, fish, eggs, and other foods, many of which are [439]
imported and sold in the shops. Rye is grown for thatching, and sally [249]
rods are used to weave several types of containers. Other subsistence [342]
activities (which also provide income for some folk) are knitting, [28] [434]
weaving, crocheting, tailoring, and sandal making. [294]

A slowly expanding cash economy features the export of cattle and 434
sheep fattened on the island and of surplus potatoes and fish, the 439
collection of seaweed for extraction of iodine at a mainland factory, the 433
keeping of tourists in private homes, and the manufacturing of craft
objects for sale to visitors and for export. At the turn of the century, 226
fishing from canoes—with nets and lines often many miles out in 433
the ocean—was an important subsistence and income activity. A few 434
islanders who owned little or no land lived primarily by fishing and
kelp-making. But over the past few decades, fish have become less [136]
plentiful and the weather more inclement, especially during winter [132] [178]

human relationships are few. There is, in fact, little difference in the 571 [554]
style of life between the most and the least prosperous of the islanders.
The web of kinship rather than the possession of status attributes, for the [602]
most part, determines who will interact with whom and in what manner.
Land and money are the principal symbols, with formal education and in- 178
fluential relatives (particularly priests, nuns, and teachers), on the main- 577
land and abroad, becoming more important. Two generations ago, 55
strength, courage, economic skills, and musical and storytelling abilities
were highly regarded as well, but acculturation has lessened their signifi-
cance.

Although there are fifty-nine nuclear families, only thirteen surnames 621
exist today. There is much inbreeding, as might be expected, and the [162] [143]
church carefully checks the genealogies of prospective spouses to ascer- [582]
tain their degree of consanguinity. Courtship is almost nonexistent, and 58
most marriages are arranged with little concern for the desires of the
young people involved. Late marriage and celibacy are as prevalent in
Inis Beag as elsewhere in Ireland. The average marriage age for men is
thirty-six and for women twenty-five, and 29 percent of those persons
eligible for marriage are single.[3] The functions of the family are mainly 594
economic and reproductive, and conjugal love is extremely rare. A sharp
dichotomy exists between the sexes; both before and after marriage men 562
interact mostly with men and women with women. The average family 593
has seven offspring, and many women are unhappy about being forced
by the unauthorized decree of local priests to produce as many children
as possible. They feel that the constant bearing and rearing of offspring
increase their work, restrict their freedom, and perpetuate the poverty
of their families. Jealousy of the greater freedom of men is commonly
expressed by women who have many young children. Mothers bestow [855]
a considerable amount of attention and affection on their offspring,
especially on their sons. However, tensions between fathers and sons 593
which develop in childhood often flare into scarcely repressed hostility 428

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[3] Twenty-nine percent of those islanders of marriageable age are single. This rises to a high of 37 percent among first and second generation Inis Beag emigrants, indicating the actions of more than just economic causes. Irish scholars, for [182] obvious reasons, tend to stress economic and other (climate, race, English oppression, the famine, loss of the Irish tongue, etc.) monistic causes in their analyses of culture and personality phenomena. Inadequate statistics for second and third generation migrants from Inis Beag suggest that the celibacy rate lowers markedly only when descendants of immigrants dissociate themselves from Irish ethnic communities and Irish-American priests. Ethnographic research is sorely needed among Irish of several generations in the countries to which they have migrated to probe this and other phenomena.

593 later on, particularly in those families where competition for the inheritance
428 of property is engendered among siblings by the fathers' attempts
to ensure favored treatment in old age.

562 Men are far more active socially than are women. The latter are
574 restricted by custom mostly to visiting, attending parties during the
571 winter, and participating in church-associated activities. Many women
[484] leave their cottages only to attend mass, wakes, and funerals or to make
infrequent calls on relatives; my wife and I talked with some elderly
women who had not visited other villages or walked to the back of the
[275] island for thirty or more years. Men not only attend parties with their
[524] womenfolk but go to dances during the summer, frequent the pubs,
play cards almost nightly during November and December (the period
when once people congregated to hear storytellers), visit the homes of
kin and friends or meet along the trails at night, and range the entire
177 island and the sea about it in their economic pursuits. Before the age
462 of benevolent government, women shared many economic tasks with
men, such as collecting seaweed, baiting lines, and gutting fish. But now
they tend to household chores and only milk cows and perform some
of the lighter farming jobs with their fathers and husbands.

• 178 The island folk are devout Catholics, despite the fact that they are
771 critical of their priests and hold pagan religious beliefs. Youth of Inis
Beag overtly disallow the existence of other than church-approved supernatural
771 entities. However, their elders cling to traditional pagan beliefs
776 and practices (many of which are Druidic in origin) about which they
are extremely secretive for fear of being ridiculed by outsiders and their
776 more skeptical neighbors. The non-Christian array of spiritual beings includes
various spirits and demons, ghosts, witches, phantom ships, and
animals and material objects possessing human attributes and volitions.
Prominent among the spirits thought to inhabit Inis Beag are the trooping
and solitary fairies, sea creatures, mermaids, and the banshee. The most
formidable of the demons is a pooka which lives in a Bronze Age burial
mound and roams the strand and common land at night altering its shape
and size at will; during the day it will twist the limbs of unwary persons
775 who choose the hill for a resting place. Ghosts, called "shades," are
frequently seen after dark performing economic tasks. They are thought
to be doing penance in purgatory, which embraces the earth as well as
a spiritual locus; this is one example of the many reinterpretations of
754 Christian and pagan belief effected by the islanders. The only form of
witchcraft practiced today is the casting of the evil eye. At least three
persons, suitably ostracized, are believed to be able to perpetrate evil

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by the act of complimenting their victims. Other religious retentions 78 found in Inis Beag are a multitude of taboos, divination through the 75 seeking of omens, magical charms and incantations of a protective nature, and an emphasis on "natural" foods, folk medicines, and other products impinging on the human body.

It is believed by many people in Ireland that the Catholicism of the 771 islanders embodies an ideal unattained on the mainland, where the faith 178 is thought to set an example for the world. In fact, the worship of the [184] folk is obsessively oriented toward salvation in the next world, with a corresponding preoccupation with sin in this world; there is a resemblance to polytheism in the manner in which they relate to the Blessed Virgin and Irish saints; Christian as well as pagan rituals and religious artifacts are often employed to serve magical ends; and many beliefs that they hold to be orthodox Catholic are in reality idiosyncratic to Inis Beag or Ireland. Christian morality in its "outward" manifestations is realized to a remarkable degree. This can be attributed, in part, to the [182] emphasis placed on good works as a means of gaining salvation; but, more importantly, it results from the already-mentioned techniques of social control exercised by the clergy, based on an overwhelming fear of damnation.

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The most active researchers in Inis Beag have been folklorists. Although 114 ethnology as a discipline is not represented in the national universities 538 and elsewhere in the Republic, folklore in the European humanistic tradition is strongly developed. The deliberate recording of the immense body of Irish folklore, folk beliefs, and folk customs began in the early part of the last century, was spurred by nativism—of which the Gaelic Revival was the main strand, and was institutionalized in the Republic with the formation of, first, the Folklore of Ireland Society in 1926, then the Irish Folklore Institute in 1930, and, finally, the Irish Folklore Commission in 1936 (Delargy 1957). For many years, commission collectors have visited Inis Beag, recording mostly the verbal art and material traits—with their associated behavior—of the island folk. They have not attempted to describe and analyze functionally and dynamically the total culture of the island; their visits have been brief and intermit-

12 cultivate that "sharpness of ear . . feeling for half-tones and shades and
subtleties, and . . . wary alertness" which characterize ethnographic
endeavor as an art as well as an epistemology.

181 The use by the folk of "wings of fancy," "honeyed words," and
"obfuscations"—popularly known as "blarney"—reflects a long tradition
195 of verbal skill. It is a vital component of Irish and Inis Beag "charm,"
• [178] which often is a product of a delicately poised set of defense mechanisms;
beneath it can lie feelings of inferiority and dislike, envy, and jealousy
of others. Blarney can very effectively serve to shield genuine thoughts
[538] and feelings and thus protect the ego. Irish folklore and literature also
reflect this tradition of verbal skill, and it is probably expressed most
formidably in James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake*. (At least one
folklorist has collected "Joycean utterances" from Irish peasants.)

123 Most of our information came from observation and unguided
interviews. It proved impossible to take field notes openly, except when
collecting innocuous data—such as the number of livestock owned by
each householder—from a few particular persons. Thus, we were forced
to limit our visits to less than two hours, after which we immediately
[562] transcribed what our combined memories could resuscitate. Despite frequent explanations of our presence in Inis Beag, which were candid and
truthful, it was thought by the islanders that I was interested only in
archeological sites and oral literature, and that my wife was not a trained
and experienced co-worker; this, obviously, reflects their previous experiences with scientists and their conception of the position of women
in society. Their inability to evaluate adequately our intentions proved
[609] to be a research boon. For once "accepted" (a relative term, since no
outsider is ever accepted) after many months in the island, we were
allowed to listen to and participate in conversations and activities from
which we would otherwise have been excluded.

123 Our data on sex came from my involvement as a participant-
*831 observer in personal and often intimate conversations with men and my
wife's counseling of women who were bothered by such matters as explaining and coping with menstruation, menopause, mental illness, the
sexual curiosity of their children, and "excessive" sexual demands of
their spouses. Our sexual knowledge and sympathy coupled with their
needs and inquisitiveness gave rise to a "counselor-client" relationship
between many of the folk and ourselves. They came to speak freely, albeit
indirectly at times, with each of us about this sphere of behavior which
arouses so much anxiety and fear. I must mention that the relationship

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regarded as a highly suggestive phrase, and I have seen it redden cheeks 831*
and lower glances in a pub. Both step- and set-dancing are practiced in [123]
Inis Beag, although the former type is dying out. This rigid-body dancing, 834
from which sex is removed by shifting attention below the hips, appears 535
to have originated in Ireland during the early nineteenth century. The [178] •
set patterns keep partners separated most of the time; but, even so,
some girls refuse to dance, because it involves touching a boy. Inis [571]
Beag men, while watching a woman step-dance, stare fixedly at her feet, [574]
and they take pains to appear indifferent when crowding at a party
necessitates holding women on their laps and rubbing against them when
moving from room to room. But they are extremely sensitive, neverthe-
less, to the entire body of the dancer and to these casual contacts,
as are the women. Their covert emotional reactions (which become [154]
overt as much drink is taken) are a form of catharsis.

SEXUAL REPRESSION: ITS HISTORICAL CAUSES

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Analysts of Irish character have put forth various hypotheses to account 114
for sexual repression, ranging from the sophisticated to the absurd. The 181
former can be classified under three rubrics: historical (e.g., the influence 182
of ascetic monasticism, Augustinianism, and Jansenism), sociocultural 155
(e.g., the Oedipus complex in the Irish family and male solidarity), and 792
psychological (e.g., masochism). Beyond serious scientific consideration 779
are such hypotheses as the loss of the Irish tongue, lack of a Catholic 121
aristocracy, fear of Protestant libertinism, and the ever-appealed-to factors of race, climate, and the famine. In the following paragraphs, I will quote excerpts from Irish authors and from critical observers of the Irish scene, including social scientists, rather than dissect their views myself.

Paul Blanshard, in his polemical but insightful (and, in my esti- [152]
mation, often understated) work, *The Irish and Catholic Power,* says
that "whatever the explanation, the total sexual expression of the Irish
people is much less than it is in other countries, and that the Catholic
crusade against normal sexual life has actually created a nation of men
and women who try to drown their fundamental instincts." In attempting 831*
to account for sexual repression on such a scale, he writes: 155
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Sex and Repression in an Irish Folk Community 155

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> places a high premium upon continence, penance and, in most spheres of life, on abstemiousness (Humphreys 1966: 25–26). 181 182

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Humphreys further points out that "the effects of the religious tradition [114] of the Irish, let alone of the countryman, upon the social behavior and attitudes of the people has never been systematically studied from a sociological point of view." He notes that the classic study, *Family and Community in Ireland*, by Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball, based on research done over thirty years ago, "leaves the matter virtually untouched," and "attributes the countryman's attitude towards sex almost exclusively to the structure of life in the rural community."

> Granted the profound influence social structure has on such a basic matter, a purely structural-functional analysis is hard put to explain adequately the quite ascetic sexual morality of the Irish countryside. . . . [An] attitude similar to that of the countryman is far from uncommon in a city such as Dublin—and among New Dubliners and Old Dubliners to boot—whose social structure differs so radically from that of the countryside. Structural-functional explanations of attitudes do hold up to a point. But world-views and their ethical consequences also have their special effect (Humphreys 1966: 24–27).

Monasticism and Augustinianism certainly "set the stage" for later Jansenism, although all three probably are connected with basic Irish culture and personality traits of long standing.

Jansenism is succinctly placed in its historical context in Ireland 831* by Joe McCarthy. 155

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> Like most everything in Ireland, the severe strictness of the old-time Catholic 181 clergymen was rooted in historical events of the country's past. During 779 the dark era of the anti-Catholic Penal Laws in the 18th Century, young 795 Irishmen had to study for the priesthood on the Continent. In the early 798 1790's, the British Government became alarmed by the rise of Theobald Wolfe Tone's Irish Protestant revolutionary movement and made hurried bids of appeasement to Irish Catholics in an effort to win their loyalty. One [874] of these conciliatory moves was the establishment of the Catholic theological [648] seminary at Maynooth in 1795. Perhaps not entirely by accident, the faculty of the new college was staffed by refugees from the French Revolution, promonarchy theologians who hated Tone's republican ideas. Most of these theologians had been influenced by Jansenism—the rigid and gloomy doctrine, denounced as Calvinistic by the Jesuits, that man is a helplessly doomed being who must endure punishing soul-searching and rigorous penances to prove his love of God. Mere faith and constant church-going . . . are not

> *831 enough to win salvation. . . . Thanks to the influence of the French theo-
> 155 logians at Maynooth, most of the Irish Catholic hierarchy sided with the
> 175 British against Tone in the rebellion of 1798, and supported Prime Minister
> • 178 William Pitt's Act of Union. Their forbidding and stern Jansenist theory
> 181 strongly flavored Irish Catholicism until it was finally officially discouraged
> 779 in the middle of the 19th Century. The last vestiges of the doctrine have
> 795 long since disappeared from Irish Catholicism, but the unusual devotion of
> 798 the Irish people today to physically punishing religious pilgrimages possibly
> [785] could be traced in part back to the old teaching of Maynooth that love of God must be demonstrated by harder acts than receiving the sacraments and going to daily Mass (McCarthy 1964: 78).

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155 Our research reveals that in some areas of Ireland "the last vestiges
178 of the doctrine" are still associated with Irish Catholicism. In fact, one
181 Dublin social scientist with whom I correspond asserts that Jansenism
779 as manifested in sexual repression probably reached its zenith in the
798 1930s and has gradually been dying out since then. However, it is still very apparent, even among "emancipated" Dubliners of the middle and upper classes.

A much harsher evaluation of Jansenism, again in an historical context, is found in Bryan McMahon's chapter in *The Vanishing Irish,* edited by Fr. John O'Brien, a collection which also includes pertinent essays by Arland Ussher and the editor himself. McMahon says:

> [785] Associated with the heresy of Jansenism were the principles of an exagger-
> ated moral and disciplinary rigorism under the pretext of a return to the primitive Church. The Celtic spirit, despite or rather because of its essential volatility . . would appear to me to provide an ideal field for the culture of Jansenism. The penances of the early Celtic monks were severity itself. . . . Today, when the idea of physical penance would appear to be repugnant to the entire world, such laudable manifestations of physical denial as the exercises of Lough Derg and Croagh Patrick are beacons amid the darkness. But the danger is that by a flaw in the Celtic nature we are apt to be led by overcompensation into penitential excesses; then it is that the traits of
> [874] Jansenism are there to fill lacunae in our nature. Significant in this context
> is the presence of four refugee doctors of the Sorbonne on the staff of Maynooth College in its early and formative years. [Their] teachings . . . cannot but have in some measure colored . . . the whole course of Irish seminary life and consequently the whole body of Irish lay thought (O'Brien 1953: 215–216).

Might not the "volatile nature" of the "Celtic spirit" and the "flaw in the Celtic nature" whose "lacunae" Jansenism fills be persistent maso-

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chism? Ussher addresses his remarks more directly to the sexual implications of Jansenism.

> Certainly the puritanic bias of the Church in Ireland surprises visitors from other Catholic communities. It is often said that Irish schools and [874] seminaries in the last century were infected with the remnants of Jansenism. . . . The dismal fact remains that Irishmen tend to regard procreation as a shameful necessity, and Irish girls grow up to think of sex as something dark, cold, and forbidding. Statistics are scarcely available, but it seems to me that the word "dirty" is used in modern Ireland in one sense only, namely, to cover every manifestation, even the most natural, of sex passion. . . . Irish married couples seldom give the impression of being biologically satisfied or even awakened; and if they are not, it may partly account for the slovenly, listless, don't care rather than devil-may-care quality of Irish life—the "spit" but never the "polish" (O'Brien 1953: 161-162).

It is interesting to note that Ussher, an Irishman, uses the word "puritanic." I have been severely criticized by Irish readers for using it in this and previous works, since it refers to an English religious movement as well as Cromwell's party.

The editor presents an equally down-to-earth pronouncement of the effects of Jansenism:

> Here Father Murphy has singled out a factor of enormous importance in explaining the grotesque proportion of bachelors and spinsters among the Irish: the typical Irish attitude toward marriage, which, as he and many other priests have suggested, would seem to have an underlying touch of Jansenism. That attitude looks upon marriage and sex as rather regrettable necessities in the propagation of the race: it would have been much better it God had arranged for offspring in some other way. Irish parents shy [864] away from the distasteful task of lifting the veil upon this earthy, unappetizing, and somewhat unclean subject (O'Brien 1953: 105).

The plea for a less "distasteful" manner of reproduction was actually 844
voiced by several Inis Beag women; and most island parents do not 864
lift the "veil," in part because of their own ignorance of sexual matters.

The impact of the Oedipus complex on Irish character has been 114
explored by cultural analysts and writers almost from the time Freud 155
first conceptualized the phenomenon. Indeed, Freud might have been describing Ireland rather than a particular class in Austria at the turn of the century (just as Marx might have had Ireland in mind when positing religion as the opiate of the oppressed masses). Two recent con-

> identification, varying in a continuum from repressed and latent homosexual 831*
> balances through to added displacements and distortions that are 15
> either pallid asexuality or fearful and bizarre misidentifications. Since the [58]
> culture does not condone sexual expression or postpones and then rigidly [838]
> defines it in marriage . . . latent homosexual balances [were hypothesized] for this group, no overtly sought interpersonal manifestations, and a facade of asexual misogyny varied only by the most personalized and bizarre female identifications. . . . [The] basic personality has stamped into it such feelings as male inadequacy, the masculine protest, hostility toward females, and the kind of latent homosexual feelings which produce a further sense of sin and guilt (Opler and Singer 1956: 15–18).

Among the seven diagnostic variables utilized by the researchers, the 831*
Irish patients ranked highest in the "Sin, Sex, and Guilt Ideology" (93 15
percent of the sample) and "Homosexuality Types" (90 percent of the 562
sample latent, none overt) categories.

Complementing the Oedipus complex in the etiology of sexual [671]
puritanism is male solidarity. It has a long history in Ireland—revealed [178]
in legend and modern literature alike—and is instrumental in delaying [582]
marriage and making for marital maladjustment. Freudian psychologists [581]
see it as one of the many possible by-products of the "universal" [182]
Oedipus complex—"male inadequacy, the masculine protest, hostility toward females, and . . . latent homosexual feelings"; but many anthropologists (especially structural-functionalists) analyze it as a sociocultural phenomenon, for it is found in societies in which the Oedipal
configuration appears not to exist. Elizabeth Coxhead, in discussing 562
Lady Gregory's play, *Grania*, alludes to the tragic plight of most Irish 539
women, past and present. 571

> *Grania* is . . . a play in which a woman is ousted from an emotional relationship 828
> between two men. The "love" is that of man for man, of brother 829
> for brother; it is loyalty to the warrior band, and a corresponding resentment of the woman who takes away the warrior's freedom, makes trouble with
> his comrades, distracts him from his purpose in life. It is an attitude which [173]
> filters through the play as light filters through crystal; which runs through the heroic Irish sagas. . . . Its continuing validity was borne out by all Lady Gregory had observed in the world around her, the world of the "loveless Irishman," the peasant society which relegated women to serfdom, the middle-class intellectual society which left them only donkey-work. . . . such a view of the Irishwoman's role, of her relegation to insignificance and her resentment under it, is not exclusively feminine. It is abundantly confirmed by Synge. His heroines . . . are creatures caged and raging, given no scope for their powers, condemned to love men who are poor things

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> 539 beside them and do not really care for them at all. O'Casey's Juno offers
> 571 further positive support, and on the negative side, so to speak, are the
> 828 quantities of second-rate Irish plays and stories that have for their main-
> 829 spring a panic dislike of women, invariably represented as shrews, hussies,
> and Aunt Sallies at whom anything can be thrown. A woman has only to
> put her nose into a saloon bar . . . to realise that Almhuin is with us still
> (Coxhead 1961: 145–146).

114 In concluding this section, I would like to mention briefly an ingenious hypothesis of the cause of sexual repression in Ireland, presented by Sean de Freine in *The Great Silence*. His book is the most "convincing" expression to date of what linguists (outside of Ireland) term "language determinism," a monism still popular in that country a century after the advent of the Irish nativistic movement. Displaying a lack of knowledge both of contemporary linguistic theory and of sexual ethics in the "heart of the Gaeltacht," de Freine says:

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> 177 The Irish are often accused of a Jansenist approach to sex, which is supposed
> • 178 to date from the French influence in the Irish Church in and just after the
> 181 penal times. But this attitude did not exist in Irish Ireland and does not
> *831 exist in the Gaeltacht today. It would seem as though, when English spread
> 795 throughout the country, it was English Puritanism and not French Jansenism,
> 779 which brought about the change. For example, certain English words with
> prudish connotations were accepted, with their connotations, by the Irish,
> while their equivalents in Irish have no such nuances. In its English setting
> Puritanism was kept in reasonable check by the other native traditions: In
> Ireland, as the old culture died, there were no such natural checks to contain it (de Freine 1966: 164).

[128] Space does not permit me to consider other causal factors listed earlier which are equally untenable.

SEXUAL REPRESSION: ITS INCULCATION

*831 The inculcation of sexual puritanism in Inis Beag must be examined
181 in four contexts: the role of the curate, the influence of visiting missions,
182 enculturation in the home, and what I will term "secular social control"
626 —the behavioral regulations imposed on themselves by Inis Beag adoles-

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS

I have already touched tangentially on some of the historical and broad 831*
cultural implications of sexual puritanism, in Ireland as well as Inis Beag. 182
In this final section, I will examine the perennially addressed phenomena 582
of late marriage, celibacy, and emigration, in their island setting, with 589
special reference to the factor of sexual repression. 178

In a population of 350, 116 persons are married, 13 are widows,
3 are widowers, and 33 males over twenty-three years of age and 21 162
females over seventeen are single. Since marriage occurs between twenty-four 589
and forty-five for men and eighteen and thirty-two for women, on 582
the basis of past statistics, only 18 men and 9 women are eligible for
marriage. As mentioned earlier, the average marriage age for males is
thirty-six and for females twenty-five. My wife and I isolated almost
two dozen interrelated causes of late marriage and the prevalence of 582
bachelor and spinsterhood. The most emphasized cause in Ireland is the 589 182
pattern of inheritance: one son, usually the eldest, must wait until the 428
father is ready to pass on his patrimony and his own siblings have
married or emigrated. In an attempt to alleviate the situation somewhat, [745]
a law today requires that to receive the "old-age" (pension) a man at
seventy must will his property to a son, or other appropriate person. This
cause is important in Inis Beag, although primogeniture is not so well defined
(of those sons inheriting property, 47 percent are first born, 42
percent second, 8 percent third, and 3 percent fourth and later). Inis [593]
Beag fathers are loath to surrender their land and control of the household
to their sons and will often play off the sons, one against another,
in order to achieve favored treatment for their wives and themselves
in their waning years. Occasionally this procedure "backfires": the sons, [167]
acting in concert, emigrate together, and an increasing amount of land [311]
lies idle because of this.

Equally loath to disturb the family status quo, island mothers will 589
often resist incoming daughters-in-law, who threaten not only their 593
commanding position but the loss of their sons' affection. Mothers whom [606]
we have interviewed in Inis Beag and elsewhere in Ireland display the [155]
extreme of Oedipal attachment when they rejoice in their sons' decision [793]

589 to join the priesthood; not only are spiritual blessings and prestige brought
593 to the family as a result, but their sons are at last removed from potential
[155] wives. Yet the Inis Beag man who wants to marry and is prevented from
[793] doing so by domineering and jealous parents is the subject of much
gossip. Outwardly, at least, his plight is considered a "shame."

* To the man in his late twenties and thirties who is secure in his
831 home and has established regularized patterns of conduct (and has a
581 mother who acts in most ways as a wife surrogate), the general responsibilities
589 of marriage, and specifically its sexual responsibility, are factors
567 militating against his seeking a spouse. Some men who have land, the
[593] consent of their parents, and willing "sweethearts" will balk at a match
because they are too happy "running with the lads," and if persuaded to
marry, they will try to retain as much of their bachelor role as possible
within marriage. It was hinted to my wife and me on several occasions
that particular island celibates almost married several times in succession,
only to find the sexual commitment too difficult to make at the last
moment.

162 Three other causes of late marriage and the single estate in Inis Beag
167 must be mentioned. Girls are more dissatisfied with their future lot than
are boys and men and are emigrating at ever younger ages, thus sharply
582 reducing the number of eligible females. During the 1950–1959 period,
589 the average age at which girls emigrate dropped below twenty-one years.
[871] Each year more of them attend schools on the mainland and thus are
[484] more exposed to stimuli which promote emigration. Mothers are puzzled
• [178] at the increasing exodus of their daughters, since women today have a
far easier time than they did a generation or two ago; but some are glad
182 to see them escape the drudgery and boredom of island existence. Since
582 late marriage has been a persistent phenomenon in Ireland since the
great famine, it has become institutionalized and serves as an expectation
for young people. We heard Inis Beag adults assert that marriage should
be postponed to conform to island mores; this usually was buttressed by
829 a rationale of males not having "enough sense" to marry until they are
[541] nearly forty years of age. Reflected in this rationale is the male age-grading
conceptualized by the folk: a man is a "boy" or "lad" until forty,
an adult until sixty, middle-aged until eighty, and aged after that (exhilarating
to the American anthropologist approaching forty who comes
582 from a society obsessed with the "cult of youth"). A final cause, often
[586] articulated by the islanders, is the fact that divorce is impossible in
Ireland, therefore the choice of a spouse must be well considered. It

appears, however, that this argument is usually used as a rationalization 582
for late marriage, when other causal factors are, in reality, responsible—
certainly when "considering" covers two or more decades!

The population of Inis Beag has dropped from a high of 532 per- 161
sons in 1861 (up 76 from the prefamine census a decade earlier) to
497 in 1881, 483 in 1901, 409 in 1926, 376 in 1956, and 350 when
my wife and I were there two years later. Today, there is grave concern 168
over the future of the island, and some folk hold that within another
generation or two Inis Beag will have gone the way of the Blasket Islands.
Although my wife and I isolated almost two dozen causes for the phe- 167
nomena of late marriage and celibacy, over thirty interrelated causes 182
pertain to emigration (many of those at work in the marital sphere also
stimulate emigration). Once again, I will address only the principal 582
causes and stress the role of sexual repression, dealing first with internal 589
factors and then external ones promoting emigration.

Among internal causes, the previously considered inheritance pattern, parents who want to maintain the family status quo for various reasons, and the girls' and young women's increasing dissatisfaction with their lot figure as prominently in the emigration picture as the marital.
Some Inis Beag men claim that the reason male youths are leaving the [434]
island is economic depression, caused by the collapse of kelp-making and
the fishing industry. But this cause is untenable when one examines the [657]
increase in government subsidies, remittances from relatives abroad, and
taxation and land rental policies; these have far more than made up for
the loss of previous revenue. Real income has increased substantially, [434]
despite recent inflation, and young men are very much aware of this
fact. Just as late marriage has become institutionalized over the past [183]
century, so has emigration since the first large-scale migration of islanders [178] •
in 1822. Emigration is a way of life, which will stimulate some folk to [582]
leave in spite of other conditions which might lead an observer to advise
their remaining.

By far the most important reason for Inis Beag's long dwindling [831]•
population is the total cultural impact of sexual puritanism and the secu-
lar "excesses" of the clergy. Blanshard writes, "When all the reasons 181
for a flight from Ireland have been mentioned, there still remains a 183
suspicion that Irish young people are leaving their nation largely because 829
it is a poor place in which to be happy and free. Have the priests created
a civilization in which the chief values of youth and love are subordinate
to Catholic discipline?" (Blanshard 1954: 154). What "remains a 167
suspicion" to Blanshard is fully confirmed by a wealth of data from Inis 182
[181]